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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how six parent-child dyads of Latino heritage including preschool children who have with speech or language disabilities engage in language and pre-literacy interactions, and what factors may influence these interactions. Because sociocultural factors influence emergent literacy interactions that take place between parents and children in families, the home environment was the context of this case study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Zentella, 2005). The dyads participating in this study lived in two counties in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Purposive sampling was used to locate the participants. A multiple case study was in order to gain an in-depth look at each family's emergent literacy interactions, not simply a picture of their frequency. Each dyad participated for five weeks. Observation notes, transcripts of audio and video recordings, and interview transcripts were coded using ATLAS.ti and a coding scheme that blended Miles and Huberman's (1994) multilevel descriptive coding with the technique called *Noticing things, collecting things, and thinking about things* (NCT) from Friese (2014). Both within and across case analysis was conducted to understand how the participating dyads engaged in emergent literacy interactions and what parent, child, and cultural factors might influence these interactions. Results indicated that conversation was the most common emergent literacy interaction type, with most conversations embedded in children's normal routines and containing many directives. Language teaching was also common, especially relating to naming and labeling objects. Print-based interactions

were usually in the context of storybook sharing. Literacy teaching, present in four of the dyads, focused on letter names, writing, and often Spanish vowel sounds. Parents reported that their ideas about language and literacy development and teaching influenced their emergent literacy interactions, as well as their culture and their children's speech and language abilities. The results of this study support the use of strength-based observation in the home to see and build upon families' *emergent literacy funds of knowledge*, and the incorporation of children's native language into speech or language assessment and service delivery.

EMERGENT LITERACY INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PARENTS OF LATINO  
HERITAGE AND THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH  
SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS

by

Sheryl H. Grace

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

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## APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Sheryl H. Grace, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Final Oral Examination

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Three year-old Raphael is sitting next to his mother in the kitchen as she writes in a birthday card she plans to send to his grandmother in Mexico. He leans over the card and asks his mom what it says. She reads it to him and lets him help put it in the envelope.

#### **Rationale for Study**

*Raphael and his family are among the many U.S. families of Latino heritage who are struggling with poverty.* The U.S. is a land of unequal opportunity. Poverty is high, and the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). While most residents value education, and many teachers and parents see education as a way out of poverty, the scourge of poverty itself interferes with educational achievement (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Achievement differences appear as early as nine months of age, and these differences affect school readiness and carry across many children's primary, secondary, and post-secondary school years (Halle et al., 2009; Reardon, 2011).

Many, though not all children whose families struggle with limited financial resources, have lower scores in literacy related areas (Hoff, 2003; Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002; B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009). These differences can appear as early as two years of age (Halle et al., 2009). Latino children growing up in poverty, in particular, tend to score lower on assessments of listening comprehension, expressive and receptive vocabulary, matching, discrimination skills, and overall reading

(Halle et al., 2009; Lee & Burkam, 2002). In fact, children of Latino and African American heritage are over-represented among the large group of students each year in U.S. schools that are unable to attain grade level literacy (Seprell, Baker, & Sonnenschein, 2005) and they tend to score lower on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than do White students (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011; IES, 2013).

*When children like Raphael enter kindergarten, they will already be expected to have some emergent literacy knowledge such as the understanding that speech is made out of individual sounds, and that some words have sounds that are the same* (Foster & Miller, 2007). Foster and Miller (2007) found that 33% of the students in their study who were not as ready for kindergarten came from high poverty backgrounds.

*Raphael and his family live in a small city in the North Carolina Piedmont region of the United States.* According to the Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project's *Demographic Profile of Hispanics in North Carolina, 2011* (Pew Research Center, 2013), the Latino population is the fastest growing population in the U.S. today. There are more Latinos than there are of any other non-European group and Latinos comprise 17% of the U.S. population. In North Carolina there are about 828,000 people of Latino heritage, mostly from Mexico. The same report indicates that, on average, they earn just \$17,200 annually. In contrast, the average yearly income for a family of four in North Carolina is nearly \$65,000 (Department of Justice, 2013). The Pew Research Center (2013) report also indicates that Latino children make up about 13% of North Carolina's K-12 student body, and as of 2011, there were 109,000 children under five, representing 17% of all

children in that age range in the state. Of the people of Latino origin living in North Carolina who are from Mexico, the majority are from the states of Guanajuato, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Michoacan (Gill, 2010). This pattern of immigration from these Mexican regions began in the 1960s because of the U.S. federal Bracero program, which brought temporary agricultural workers from these central Mexican regions to work on North Carolina farms (Sandos, 1983). Most of the children of Latino origin living in North Carolina were born here, and their average age is nine years. About 41% of the Latinos living in North Carolina were born in the United States (Kasarda & Johnson, 2006; Officer of the Governor & Director of Hispanic Affairs, 2010). Many adults of Latino origin choose to live in particular North Carolina communities where other people from their home region or community already live, and some of these adults are married to native North Carolinians (Gill, 2010).

*While growing up in Mexico, Raphael's mother completed the ninth grade, but was unable to go any further because her family felt the nearest high school was too far to attend daily.* She, like approximately 41% of Latino adults in the U.S., does not have a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). As of 2011, 33% of Hispanics born in another country had less than a ninth grade education (Brown & Lopez, 2013). Yet, research shows that maternal education relates to child print knowledge, interest in literacy, nonverbal intelligence, and children's school readiness (Halle et al., 2009; Sawyer et al., 2013).

*Raphael and his family speak Spanish daily in the home, though his mother would like to learn more English to communicate with doctors, other professionals, and parents*



*she encounters in her community.* In a longitudinal study by Halle et al. (2009), results indicated that preschool children who speak a language besides English in the home score moderately lower on measures of cognitive skills than children who spoke English only in the home. Bilingualism can have negative effects on vocabulary size and lexical item access, but it should not be automatically considered as a developmental risk factor. It can have positive effects on executive function, discrimination between languages, and a child's metalinguistic awareness of pragmatic cues in conversation (Bialystok & Fergis, 2010; Kummerer, Lopez-Reyna, & Hughes, 2007; Sebastián-Gallés, Albareda-Castellot, Weikum, & Werker, 2012; Siegal, Tallandini, Pellizzoni, & Michelin, 2011).

*Raphael has delayed Spanish language development, and English is not spoken at home. He will soon receive speech language therapy twice a week, and will likely attend a public preschool program where he will receive specialized services. Along with his communication needs, the therapist will address his emergent literacy needs.* Many, but not all, children with speech and language impairments in early childhood have reading difficulty during their school years (Cabell et al., 2010; Catts & Kamhi, 2005; Hammer, Farkas, & Maczuga, 2010; Schule, 2004).

### **Research Problem**

North Carolina agencies that provide home visiting sometimes serve families living in poverty and aim to serve more families like Raphael's (North Carolina Exceptional Children Assistance Center, 2010). Speech/language therapists want to aid these families in using emergent literacy interactions that will help children of Latino heritage be ready for school (Foster & Miller, 2007). Research on Latino home literacy

interactions is crucial to understanding how to provide better support for all forms literacy development of children who are Latino (Atwill, Blanchard, Christie, Gorin, & Garcia, 2009). Manz, Hughes, Barnabas, Bracaliello, and Ginsburg-Block (2010) assert that because much of the research on literacy practices in families is not applicable to culturally and economically diverse families, more research is needed. In response to the this reality, it would seem there are still unanswered questions that need addressing, in order for early childhood professionals to provide and use the most culturally relevant intervention strategies possible. Addressing these questions should aid in our efforts to work with these families to create these interventions that can better ensure that children of Latino heritage reach their fullest potential and are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate emergent literacy and language interactions that parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language difficulties engage in together at home. The questions that will guide this study are:

1. How are families of Mexican heritage engaging in emergent literacy interactions with their children who have speech and language impairments?
2. What sociocultural and language socialization factors influence the characteristics of these interactions?

### **Positionality**

Complete objectivity is not possible or desired in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Just as the families with whom I will be working operate as part

of a socio-historic framework that influence them, I do also. I am the oldest child in a family of four. I am a first generation college student, but I have always considered my parents well educated. I am white, middle class, and grew up in a small town that was very white. Though born an insider, I was a social misfit and was not the best elementary student, so I often felt like an outsider unless I was at church. I am an independent but married woman. I was financially able to work only part-time outside of the home when my children were small. I am a Quaker convert who has found the Quaker community the best spiritual home for my politically left-leaning tendencies.

I have had many cross-cultural experiences since graduating from high school in 1983. In those experiences, I felt more like a guest than an outsider. I have benefited from the guidance and experience of other mothers of children of color, and have friends of color. Yet, I realized at the outset that my life experiences are very different from the ones of the parents that would participate in this study. I am also a new researcher with a lot to learn, and I am still learning. I began this research in the hope that I would learn a great deal from the parents who would be participating.

Into this and other research, I carry with me what I have learned over many years of education. A lasting impression I took with me from my education at Bank Street College of Education, was the importance of working closely with families in a culturally responsive and respectful way. The process involved in planning for and conducting this study made me reflect on how deeply rooted the Bank Street philosophy of family involvement is within me.

Bank Street made its mark, but it was parenting that caused me to completely re-think education. I was solely responsible for the education of my children from preschool through middle school. We adopted Joseph when he was three months old, and parenting him has involved learning more about racial identity, and gives me an emotional connection to past and current experiences of African Americans and the common experiences with which those from non-majority groups must cope. This parenting experience and that of working with colleagues and students of color at Forsyth Technical Community College, are experiences of ethnic diversity that I value greatly.

Having the experience of teaching my own children, I came to see parents as capable educators of their children, even if this education is provided informally. I have come to see empowering families as important, and the recognition of the power that is already present as important also. I thought of my role as researcher in this endeavor would be as a collaborator with families of low socioeconomic status. I did understand, however, that all of the parents participating in this study might not see themselves the same way I saw myself when I was parenting young children, and that they may take different roles.

Long before parenting our son of color, my interest in the Latino community developed. After taking Spanish in high school, I taught English as a second language during my summers while in college. Most of my students were from Mexico and Central America. It was from them that I learned how important education was to them, and that I did not know anything about making tortillas. I spent many evenings teaching in the migrant camps during those summers. After college, I was even able to visit the

Dominican Republic, and later Oaxaca, Mexico, to study Spanish. More recently, I grew in my familiarity with those of Mexican heritage when I was able to teach English again, this time to a group of seasonal farmworkers in Yadkin County. Later, I was fortunate to receive the tremendous opportunity to study in Guanajuato, Mexico for seven weeks, where I learned more about Mexican cultures and education, met important education researchers, and made many other important connections for the future.

These experiences have formed and changed me. While I am not a member of a community of Mexican or Latino origin, I certainly value their language/s, and their many cultures, and want to learn more about their backgrounds and experiences. I am also grateful that, with the help of friends from Mexico, I have been able to achieve some level of fluency in Spanish. At the same time, I identify with second language learners like myself.

Based on my education and past experiences, I have developed understandings that influence my research. I believe that early experiences are essential to current and future well-being of children. In spite of that belief, from my experiences in homeschooling-especially in unschooling- I have come to see that education takes many forms, and that formal teaching is not always necessary (Holt, 1981). I also feel a commitment to reducing and preventing poverty through early literacy intervention with children at-risk, and children with other special needs, and this intersects with my respect and appreciation of people from varying socio-economic and racial backgrounds. I feel that if one must teach, this teaching must be done in a culturally relevant way that considers the strengths and needs of families, and empowers them (Cartledge & Kourea,

2008). I believe that culturally relevant and effective work to help parents must be undertaken collaboratively with them. I see this study as a necessary precursor to that collaborative effort.

### **Organization of this Dissertation Report**

In the following chapter (Chapter II), the theoretical framework which provides grounding for the study will be explained, the most relevant literature will be discussed, and a conceptual framework will be presented based on that literature. In the next chapter (Chapter III), the design of the study will be explained, and the methodology will be discussed. Chapter IV will address the within-case results, Chapter V will present cross-case results, and the final chapter will present a discussion of the results, their limitations, and some recommendations.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this research was to investigate emergent literacy and language interactions that parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language difficulties engage in together at home. The questions that guided this research were:

1. How are families of Latino heritage engaging in emergent literacy interactions with their children who have speech and language impairments?
2. What sociocultural and language socialization factors influence the characteristics of these interactions?

When conceptualizing emergent literacy, one should consider not only skills but also a child's social context (Sulzby, 1986). The content below explains the theoretical framework on which this research was grounded. It looks closely at the individual elements of the framework and the framework as a whole.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Vygotsky's socialcultural/historical theory can provide an effective framework with which to understand emergent literacy (Sulzby, 1986; Smagorinsky, 2011).

Combined with Vygotsky's work, Ochs and Schieffelin's (2011) Theory of Language Socialization can also be helpful in understanding emergent literacy within diverse family contexts. Together, these two theoretical approaches form what is referred to in in this

study as the sociocultural/language socialization framework that guided this literature review and the study as a whole. Both theories are described below.

### **Vygotsky and Sociocultural/Sociohistorical Theory**

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory is relevant to this study because formal literacy instruction was a central focus of his work (Wertsch, 1991). Smagorinsky (2011) explains that according to a Vygotskian perspective, "reading is a cultural phenomenon" (p. 108). According to Vygotsky (1978), words and sounds represent not only real objects, but also relationships for the child. When explaining the use of Vygotskian frameworks for reading research, Smagorinsky (2011) states that

How one reads is a function of the setting of the reading and its socially, culturally, and historically established goals, strategies, purposes, and other processes and motivations as they intersect with what readers bring to the transaction. (p. 108)

Speech serves as a foundation for all other signs, and is symbolic. Word meanings, the way a thought relates to a word, evolve as a child develops and the workings of thought change (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky also theorized that language use by very young children develops as a way to communicate with others in their environment; then children begin to use it to talk aloud to themselves as a method for organizing their thinking and behavior. Later, this external speech is internalized to guide their understanding and behavior. In this way, thought and language begin separately, and then merge to the point in which thought and word drive and develop each other. Signs, like language, are psychological tools. These psychological tools have similarities with mechanical tools, though they are not identical. Signs are internally



directed and used as a way to master oneself, or direct one's own thoughts, whereas psychological tools like external speech are used as a way to make external changes in the environment and objects (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, a child can use speech as a tool to request something from their mother using a word, which is a sign. Children change the environment when they get what they want. "A tool such as speech or writing can create signs such as words and texts that serve to structure the developmental environment of an individual" (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 31). Tools and signs exist and are used in the child's cultural historical context. Reading and conversation are "sign-using activities" that occur within the context of and are influenced by the culture in which the child lives; they help enable the child to function within a particular culture (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 38). In this way,

signs mediate a person's appropriation of cultural values and the means through which people communicate them. Understanding how cultures sanction particular tools and signs thus becomes critical. (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 31)

Children learn how to use the cultural tool of literacy in their various social contexts. For example, homes and schools are two different settings, and the cultural contexts may or may not be consistent between them (Heath, 1983; Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; Purcell-Gates, Gigliana, Najafi, & Orellana, 2011; Smagorinsky, 2011). In the case of Raphael, Spanish is spoken in the home but English may be the primary language at school. Depending on the setting, tools could vary in the way they are introduced to children, the ways they are used by children and adults, and who introduces them (Smagorinsky, 2011). Perhaps parents who are from Latino backgrounds who have

children with speech or language impairments have ways of using signs and tools that are unique to their cultural backgrounds, and these ways may vary from the ways early childhood professionals presume they are used.

In addition to the concept of signs and tools, the concept of mediation, or mediational means, is another important element of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that relates to emergent literacy, particularly, written language. Using signs and tools is a mediating activity. Vygotsky believed that language enables more complex thought processes to occur in the brain. Signs and tools can be used as means to mediate, or facilitate connections, between lower and higher cognitive processes, and influence behavior (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky's theory emphasizes how skills develop and are acquired by children with the help of more experienced individuals within their social contexts (Pellegrini, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2011). According to Vygotsky, "All higher functions originate as actual relations between two individuals" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). The practice of helping children reach a concept or operation at a higher, more decontextualized level is also a form of mediation (Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky (1978) indicated that this assistance should be provided to children as they are trying to learn to do a task at which they are independently and it should enable the child to be successful at the task. Vygotsky (1978) noted that there seems to be a "sweet spot" for teaching children that lies between what the child can do independently, and what the child can do with when given slight assistance. He called that space the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). A parent, for example, may scaffold their child's request making by asking the child to choose between two foods while naming both so the child

can hear the names for each of them. The foods, the way the meal is served at the table, and the language used are all part of the child's sociocultural context, and the parent has given the child just the level of assistance needed to interact in this social setting of a meal.

Spoken language and what is represented by it can be linked by written language (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Written communication relies on word meanings that have been officially accepted in the culture (Vygotskiĭ & Kozulin, 1986). Luria (1975), Vygotsky's student, found that literate individuals were able to think more abstractly than non-literate individuals; they could use more decontextualized reasoning. Children's emergent literacy development can also be influenced by the extent to which their parents use decontextualized speech during conversation (Leyva, Reese, Grolnick, & Price, 2008), especially reminiscent conversation about good and bad behavior (Sparks & Reese, 2012). When parents read books while conversing with their children in elaborative ways, and when they have conversations with their children that include decontextualized talk about events and objects not immediately present, this interaction can be interpreted as learning the decontextualized thinking common in "good" readers, and it advances their cognitive development (Leva, Sparks, & Reese, 2012; Sparks & Reese, 2012). Parents can also differ in the extent to which they call children's attention to the printed word (Romero-Contreras, 2004, 2006), and differ in whether or how they teach language or literacy directly. These practices can be seen as a ways parents mediate their children's sign and tool use.

### **Shieffelin and Ochs's Language/Literacy Socialization Theory**

Language socialization theory can serve as a lens for research investigating the emergent literacy interactions of families of Mexican heritage also. While sociocultural theory is rooted in Vygotsky's work, it has evolved over time (Perez, 2004). One area of research that is rooted in and evolved from sociocultural theory is language socialization. Language socialization theory is concerned about how cultures address and influence language-oriented sign and tool use (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1984). Though Schiefflin and Ochs (1984) coined the term, and much of the early language socialization research related to literacy began with them, some recent research does address Latinos in the United States (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Rodriguez, 2005; Zentella, 2005).

Language Socialization research involves the study of social and linguistic ability (communicative competence) within a group, and often uses anthropological, psychological, and sociological pathways for this study (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1984). According to Schiefflin and Ochs, various cultures sometimes use literacy practices in different ways and members new to the context, though they are novices and receive direction, also have some influence and control over practices. Language socialization research "focuses on how children are socialized through the use of language as well as how children are socialized to use language" in socially appropriate ways, and this study can extend throughout children's lifespans (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Schecter & Bayley, 2002; Schiefflin & Ochs, 1984, p. 184). Language socialization research has increasingly been conducted in heterogeneous settings like the Latino communities in the United States (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Pease-Alvarez, 2003; Pease-Alvarez

& Vásquez, 1994; Schechter & Bayley, 2002; Zentella, 2005). This socialization around language extends into the area of literacy because children are socialized to use print in ways that are aligned with their culture through “literacy events” that they engage in with more experienced members, which are given a culturally determined value and meaning (Heath, 1983; Schiefflin & Ochs, 1984).

The ways parents converse with their children, or interact with them verbally, can be viewed as ways parents teach children to use language in their culture (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). In addition, the ways parents use printed materials can be culturally specific, and can provide a model for print use that is specific to a particular group (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). This research involved examination of these literacy events (emergent literacy interactions) within families with Latino backgrounds. Specifically, there may be similarities in the ways parents teach their children to use spoken and written language that are unique to the parents from Mexico that live in the North Carolina Piedmont region.

When examining interactions it is important to keep in mind the following caveat: While using the language socialization approach to research family practices can provide helpful information for our work with families who are from Latino backgrounds useful in helping parents promote language and literacy development, there are pitfalls researchers must be careful to avoid (Zentella, 2005). These pitfalls include ignoring diversity within a certain group, valuing the practices of parents who undertake a teacher-like role over those who do not, and insinuating that parent adopted strategies will only

work one way and will determine exactly what a child will learn (Schechter & Bayley, 2002).

### **Sociocultural/Language Socialization Framework**

For the purpose of this study, the sociocultural and language socialization theories were combined into one framework (see Figure 1) as described below.

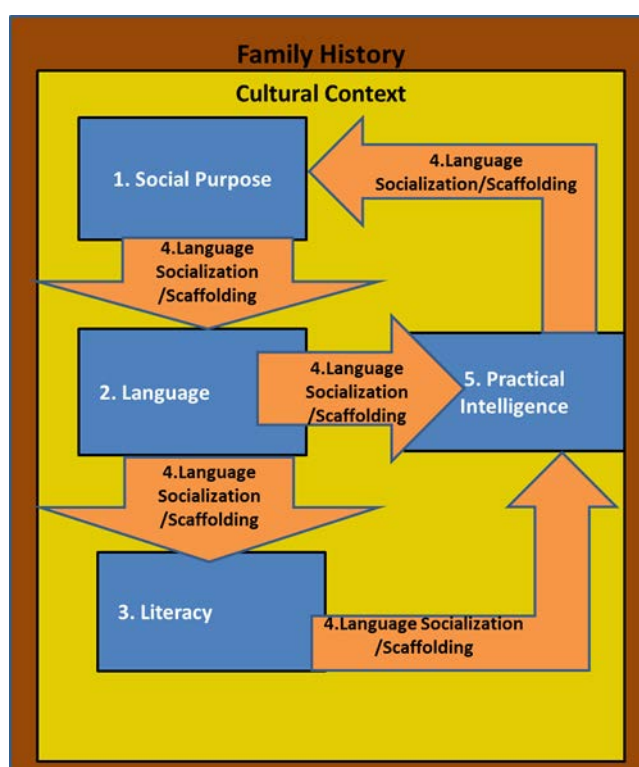


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

Oral language and the written word are cultural tools that serve a social purpose. These tools exist and are used in varied cultural historical contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). A social purpose (1) is the root of language use (2), both for parents, and for their children. Social interaction is crucial for movement through the various elements of this system,

where interactions between more and less skilled individuals aid in literacy and language development (Vygotsky, 1978). Print literacy (3) has its roots in language, and the social purposes of language. Parents assist and guide (or scaffold) their children's attempts to use the tools of language and literacy (Vygotsky, 1978). They use methods that may be culturally specific, to help their children learn to use literacy and language, in ways that are specific to their communities and homes (4) (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). These ways of using language and literacy help to build a child's practical intelligence (5), which includes symbolic thought (Vygotsky, 1978). The intellectual development that the language and literacy interactions support, are developed in community specific ways which fulfill a social purpose (1). In addition, language interactions can influence intellectual development without the mediation of literacy, and still benefit intellectual development and later literacy.

It is important to keep in mind that this movement through the developmental path of language and literacy is aided by caregivers, as soon as the child is seen by them as a participant in the culture, and often occurs using community specific ways in which more experienced individuals interact linguistically to socialize less experienced individuals (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1984). These linguistic social interaction patterns exist across communities, are passed down through generations, and are evident in the ways parents and other family members interact with children within family contexts. These interaction patterns, based on cultural norms, influence the degree to which caregivers adjust their speech to the child's level of development, treat infants as capable conversational partners, and manipulate/prompt child communication to fit cultural

norms (Schiefflin & Ochs, 1984). As novices grow in linguistic competence, they also become more able to function within various community contexts (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Ochs and Schieffelin (2011), while culture is passed down, the child as a novice still has agency, and is influenced throughout development by experiences in other cultural contexts, which also have an impact on family linguistic socialization. The growing child can, especially in bilingual families, can influence language socialization (Schechter & Bayley, 2004). Many researchers have explored language socialization of minority groups, including that of people of Latino origin (Schechter & Bayley, 2004; Zentella, 2005). Sometimes, there is discontinuity between the ways schools and homes socialize children's language use and practices (Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; Zentella, 2005).

The following content explains the literature review process, sets the stage for the study, and gives a detailed description of the most current and relevant literature that relates to the emergent literacy interactions parents have with their children. In addition, this review of the literature focuses on language and pre-literacy interactions parents who are Latino have with their young children with speech or language impairments and what this literature has to say about the factors that influence these interactions.

### **Literature Search Process**

With the goal of examining the existing literature related to emergent literacy interactions of parents from Mexico whose children have been diagnosed with speech or language impairments, the following processes were used. EBSCO, Google Scholar, and Psych Info databases were researched to capture the existing literature published between



2000 and 2014 on emergent literacy interactions among Latino families who had children with speech or language impairments. In addition, literature providing general information on the home literacy interactions between parents who are Latino who have children with typical speech and language development was collected. Also collected was literature related to the emergent literacy development of children with speech language impairments. The following key word and word pairs were used: preschool and Hispanics and home literacy; home literacy practices; home literacy practices and Latino; language delays and emergent literacy; home literacy practices, speech language and home literacy and Latino; home literacy and preschool language impairment; Latino home literacy; and language delay. These keyword searches yielded 213 articles. The abstracts for these articles were examined and the studies that related to the topics listed above that provided information on family literacy practices or the home literacy environment in the U.S. were kept. This culling resulted in 52 articles. Searches using the same databases for articles and books related to the theoretical framework yielded nine sources. After hand searching through the reference lists of the selected articles, 61 additional publications were identified that related to low SES, general background information on speech and language impairment, general family literacy practices, Latino family literacy practices, and family literacy practices in families with children who have speech or language impairments.

Once these articles and books were collected, extensive notes from most articles were copied onto digital notecards, and each card was matched with the article or book corresponding with each note. The cards were organized based on a priori themes and

subthemes that had emerged during reading. The cards in each theme and subtheme were grouped by source and ordered into a coherent series. In addition, the articles that related directly to the a priori theme, emergent literacy interactions of parents of Latino origin who have children with speech or language impairments, were analyzed using an Excel matrix. Over the course of the following year, new related articles were added and categorized as described above.

### **Emergent Literacy Environments and Interactions**

Before exploring the literature related to the emergent literacy interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language impairments, it is first necessary to identify the definition of literacy that was used in this study. Later emergent literacy interactions will also be defined.

The definition of literacy has evolved over the years, and researchers have not arrived at a consensus. Sociocultural researchers tend to define literacy as a set of practices, rather than simply as a set of print-related abilities (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Dail & Payne, 2010; Perry, 2012). Perry (2012) explains that taking this perspective on literacy enables researchers to see how literacy is used in people's daily lives, understand the sociocultural factors that influence the development of literacy, and see how people acquire it. He also explains that while seeing literacy as a collection of practices is helpful to the field, it may not allow an in depth understanding of the process of becoming literate, or give us specific strategies in how to help individuals that struggle with literacy acquisition.

Raphael is in a developmental stage of literacy called *emergent literacy*; he is taking his first steps in learning to read. The fact that he asks his mother what the card says shows that he understands that speech can be written down and that the “squiggles” on the page have meaning. The definition of emergent literacy has evolved since first used in Marie Clay’s (1966) unpublished doctoral dissertation, *Emergent Reading Behavior*, and later popularized in the work, *Emergent Literacy* by Elizabeth Sulzby and William H. Teale in 1986. The term “emergent literacy,” is used to describe the stage in which a child is “getting ready to read.”

A child’s emergent literacy skills develop at home long before school entry through their interactions with their caregivers (Manz, Hughes, Barnabas, Bracaliello, & Ginsburg-Block, 2010). Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998, 2001) define emergent literacy as a stage beginning at birth that falls along the developmental continuum of learning to read. Emergent reading occurs before formal reading develops, involves skills that develop over time and influence each other, and encompasses the environment. Emergent literacy includes the interactions around language and print that support it (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001), emergent literacy involves phonological processing, print principal, emergent writing, and oral language skills. Emergent literacy is described by Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) as including two domains of processes and skills. The *Outside-in* domain includes language units beyond the printed word level such as words, semantic units such as concepts, and contextual units such as narrative. These units are part of the concepts and contexts important to being able to understand what has been or is being written. The *Inside-out* domain

involves skills and processes at the printed word level that include language such as words, sound units such as phonemes, and print units such as graphemes. These units enable the emergent reader to eventually decode graphemes into their sounds, and connect these sounds with words and language.

For the purposes of this study, emergent literacy was defined as follows:

- Emergent Literacy is the state in which children begin to realize that speech can be written down, and that the print they see can be communicated orally; a developmental stage in its own right which occurs before formal reading; a stage that involves skills that develop over time and influence each other, and encompasses the environment and the interactions that support those skills (Sulzby, 1986; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, 2003)

To aid in the discussion of the current literature, and in the implementation of this study, the term, *Emergent Literacy Interactions* was used to refer to interactive literacy events (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) or those interactions between family members that relate to literacy development. These interactions may be conversation, print based, or involve instances of literacy or language teaching (National Center For Family Literacy, 2009).

Though there is of literature on home literacy experiences, there has been a tendency to focus on practices of traditional families who are of European decent, and middle class (Carrington & Luke, 2003). In addition, Gonzalez and Uhing (2008) point out that research on families coping with poverty has tended to view these families as if they are a homogeneous group instead of considering their individual cultural backgrounds. The available literature does provide a glimpse into important emergent

literacy interactions between diverse parents and their children. This body of research, which describes various home environments and types of interactions, is summarized below served as the starting point for this study.

### **Emergent Literacy Environments**

Emergent literacy interactions are part of the home literacy environment and take place within the larger social context of the home environment. There is wide variation in home literacy environments, even amongst families of low socioeconomic backgrounds, and for children as young as birth to three years of age (B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009). The factors of the home literacy environment relate significantly to children's emergent literacy skills, later cognitive development, receptive language, phonological awareness, word decoding ability, and oral language, even when demographic differences between groups are taken into account (Bingham, 2007; Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009). Farver, Xu, Lonigan, and Eppe (2013) found children's home literacy experiences affect early literacy skill development of bilingual children as early as the first year of life, though literacy experiences in one language are associated with a drop in skills in the other language. Researchers in one study that examined the home language and verbal interactions, the learning climate, and the social emotional climate of low income, African American preschoolers found these factors were related to children's emergent literacy achievement (Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001). Even for poor children with speech or language impairments, the frequency at which home literacy activities occur can have a significant influence on later literacy, though the home literacy environment may affect

children with language delay without cognitive impairment (Specific Language Impairment) differently (Hammer et al., 2010; Sawyer et al., 2013). According to IDEA, 2004, “speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” [34 CFR §300.8(c)(11)]. For the purposes of this study, the term speech or language impairment was used to refer to a continuum of speech and language difficulties that impair or delay speech and language development. These language difficulties can relate to articulation, receptive or expressive language difficulties, or a combination of these (American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery, 2014; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2014; Boyse, 2008; Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, 2013; National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2010; Schule, 2004).

While the home literacy environment is important, the overall qualities in the home environment as a whole are also influential. Roberts, Jurgens, and Burchinal (2005) tried to determine which storybook sharing interaction characteristics had the most impact on the emergent literacy skills of 72 African American children from low-income families in their long-range study. They found that it was the overall responsiveness and support from the home environment, not particular practices, that contributed most to the development of those skills. Responsiveness was defined as “how promptly, consistently, and appropriately the child’s mother responds to the child’s cues, interests, and overt behaviors” (Roberts et al., 2005, p. 350). Reese and Gallimore (2000) pointed out that some of the families who were Latino and participated in the

ethnographic portion of their study, sometimes did not pick up on the efforts of their young children to initiate a literacy interaction.

### **Introduction to Emergent Literacy Interactions**

While there has been extensive research in the area of family literacy and language practices, and the information on the importance of responsiveness is part of that research, there is still much more to be known in reference to families who have children with speech or language impairments. Important differences, discussed below, may exist between the home literacy environment in the homes of these families, and families whose children have typical language development (Sawyer et al., 2013). According to Justice, Skibbe, McGinty, Piasta, and Petrill (2010), for families with children who have language impairments, greater understanding about factors at the child and family level that impact the feasibility of parent implemented literacy interventions may provide insight as to how to make interventions more feasible in the face of obstacles. Research into the emergent literacy interactions of families from Latino backgrounds who have a child with speech and language impairments helps to address this need. In light of that need, research presented below explores the most recent literature relating to the emergent literacy interactions within families who have children with speech or language impairments, including families of Latino origin.

### **Types of Emergent Literacy Interactions**

While the literature related to the home literacy environment and the home environment as a whole has yielded important results, it also details the qualities or attributes of parental engagement during interactions and how these can be influential (B.

L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009). Four kinds of emergent literacy interactions between parents and children stand out in the literature: print based, literacy teaching, conversation, and language teaching interactions.

### **Print Based Interactions**

For the purpose of this research, print based interactions were defined as those that have print as their focus (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998). Sharing storybooks or interactions pertaining to environmental print are two examples that would fall into this category. Research on storybook sharing dominates the literature related to print based interaction in families. According to the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP), the family literacy practice most frequently recommended in the literature is that of storybook sharing (Lonigan, Shanahan, Cunningham, & The National Literacy Panel, 2008). Storybook sharing is also one of the most frequently researched interactions (Manz, Hughes, Barnabas, Bracaliello, & Ginsburg-Block, 2010). Utilizing data from 19 peer reviewed empirical studies, the 2008 NELP analyzed the effects of interventions that incorporated shared reading with teachers and parents in both group and in one-to-one settings. Children were between the ages of two and five years old. Most of the studies involved changing the frequency or style in which stories were read to children, with the children in comparison groups receiving less of, or an unmodified version of, the story sharing experiences. The NELP found that the effects on children's oral language and print knowledge were moderate in size, with no other significant effects noted on phonemic awareness or alphabet knowledge. The panel noted the small number of studies that measured phonemic awareness or alphabet knowledge and how such a small



number of studies could not completely rule out effects in those areas. The panel found that the skill area most impacted by reading aloud to children was oral language. Children who were read to using modified frequency or methods scored .7 of a standard deviation higher on oral language measures than children who were not read to in that manner. The benefits of shared reading influenced children's scores, whether children were at risk or not, and whether it was the parents providing the story sharing or the teachers. According to Lonigan et al. (2008), there were too few studies at the time of publication to aid in understanding the effects of shared reading on distinct ethnic or socioeconomic groups, or to draw any conclusions. This fact exemplifies the need for further research in this area.

Some of the more recent research sheds light on storybook sharing within diverse families. In their study involving 223 children in Head Start, Bracken and Fischel (2008) found that parent and child storybook sharing was related to early literacy achievement, along with child interest, and that these predicted later print concepts, receptive vocabulary, and story concepts. In a longitudinal study by B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al. (2009), most Latino mothers of lower income they surveyed reported engaging in storybook sharing with their children several times a week, though infrequently at bedtime.

There is some indication that frequency is not the only important factor one should consider when examining storybook sharing. In a 2007 study, Bingham found that the affective quality of storybook sharing interactions of European American mothers related to the level of print concept and letter knowledge of children but not to the their

skills in receptive language. In another study with mostly European American upper middle class mothers as participants, Weigel, Martin, and Bennett (2006) found that the more educated group of mothers involved their children more in storybook sharing than did the less educated group of mothers. More research is needed to better understand this dynamic.

Some families' emergent literacy interactions involve environmental print, which sometimes extends to exploration of writing together (Lynch, 2008; Neumann, Hood, & Ford, 2013; Neumann, Hood, & Neumann, 2009). In Lynch (2008), families of children who attended Head Start reported that they read storybooks most often to their children but pointed out environmental letters just as often. They also read items such as cereal boxes, as messages, cards, signs, and sometimes game boards to them, but most reported that the children could only write their names.

**Print-based interactions in Latino families.** One kind of print based interactions researched in regards to parents who are Latino, is storybook sharing. According to a meta-analysis by Manz, Hughes, Barnabas, Bracaliello, and Ginsburg-Block (2010), much of the research on family based emergent literacy interventions between 1994 and 2007 that concentrated on storybook sharing either did not indicate their ethnic backgrounds of the participants, or included few Latino or ELL participants. While sparse, the most recent intervention research related to storybook sharing in Latino families addresses the frequency and qualities of this interaction and has revealed relevant information on general literacy practices of these families (Billings, 2009; Caspe, 2009; Lopez, Barrueco, Feinauer, & Miles, 2007; Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Perry,

Kay, & Brown, 2008; Purcell-Gates, 2013; Reese & Gallimore, 2000; Santos & Alfred, 2011). This research is discussed below.

Though the literature indicates that parents of Latino heritage are less likely to engage in storybook sharing with their young children than parents of other ethnic backgrounds, this does not mean that they do not care about or want to aid in their children's literacy achievement or that they are unwilling to change (Billings, 2009; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Lopez et al., 2007). When parents of Latino heritage do engage in storybook sharing with their children, studies show these interactions are often different from those of European-American families. For example, Caspe (2009) found that during storybook sharing of a picture book between mothers from Latino American backgrounds who were of low income and children, the mothers tended to use ask few questions of them. In an earlier study, Melzi and Caspe (2005) found that mothers living in Puerto Rico tended to adopt the role of storyteller when sharing a wordless picture book, discouraging their children's attempts to add to the story, while the European American mothers sharing the same story, encouraged and supported their children's efforts to tell the story themselves. Perry et al. (2008) found that Latino mothers tried to make their storybook sharing interactions entertaining for their children when using the literacy bags the children's preschool sent home. Delgado-Gaitan (1990) noted that parents in her study did read storybooks to their preschool children. Reese and Gallimore (2000) found that some mothers of Latino heritage began reading to their younger children earlier than they did with their older children, when schools sent reading homework for the older children to complete. Santos and Alfred (2011) found that

Latino parents studying for their own GED understood the importance of reading aloud to their children and wanted to do it more often.

Storybook sharing is not the only print-based interaction occurring in Latino families. In an ongoing ethnographic study of the literacy practices among Mexican migrant farmworkers in southern Michigan, Victoria Purcell-Gates (2013) found that parents engaged primarily in print based interactions other than storybook sharing. Their interactions with print involved the use of greeting cards, calendar, work related papers, and reading of the Bible and songbooks.

**Print-based interactions between parents and their children with speech or language impairment.** In order to gain some insight into the emergent literacy interactions of Latino parents with their children with speech or language impairments, it may be fruitful to examine the literature related to interactions between parents without Latino backgrounds and their children with speech or language impairments, and the environment in which these interactions take place. The home literacy environment impacts the vocabulary of children with speech and language impairments (Skibbe, Justice, Zucker, & McGinty, 2008). For example, the frequency of shared reading interactions has been shown to modestly affect young children's literacy skills (Sawyer et al., 2013).

When considering interactions between parents and their children with speech language impairments, it is important to remember that just because a family has a child with a disability; it does not always mean that they have fewer emergent literacy interactions. In fact, Breit-Smith, Cabell, and Justice (2010) found no differences

between the number of literacy practices in families with children who have disabilities and families without children with disabilities after controlling for SES and age. Skibbe et al. (2008) noted however, that mothers who had a child with a Specific Language Impairment, a condition in which language, not intelligence is affected, reported fewer literacy activities. Skibbe, Moody, Justice, and McGinty (2010) noted that the affective quality of book sharing interactions between mothers and their children with language impairment was different from that of mothers of children with typical development. According to that study, mothers who had children with language impairments were somewhat less emotionally supportive during storybook reading than were mothers whose children were developing typically. This finding is similar to the above mentioned differences in storybook sharing affective qualities between Latino and European American families (Caspe, 2009; Perry et al., 2008).

**Print-based interactions within Latino parents who have children with communication disorders.** The most recent research featured below, while sparse, has shed more light onto the story sharing interactions in families with Latino heritage who have children with speech language impairments. Most of this literature is from studies by the same researcher and her colleagues (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2006; Kummerer et al., 2007; Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009). Two of these papers, Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2006, 2009), were studies that featured parents who were among a group of 14 Mexican American mothers with children receiving speech language therapy. This researcher used a method in which parents were taught how to use specific techniques to facilitate their children's language development. The mothers had been in the U.S. for an

average of nine years, and had an average of eight years of education. Their children ranged in age from one and a half to a little more than three years of age. Dr. Kummerer provided the speech therapy, demonstrated and encouraged interactive storybook sharing, phonemic awareness activities, and practice with spelling by letter sounds. Field notes and interviews with the mothers yielded insight into their emergent literacy practices and related beliefs.

In Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2006), the mothers were asked what activities related to speech therapy they engaged in at home. The mothers explained that they sometimes read books to their children, but the majority of the interactions they described did not involve storybook sharing. In Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009), a case study, the literacy interactions were centered upon chores such as bill paying and the homework of older siblings.

In other research, Binger, Kent-Walsh, Berens, and Del Campo (2008) taught parents of Latino heritage who had children with speech or language impairments techniques to enable their children to produce multiword phrases. They explained that the parents with whom they worked reported reading to them nightly and asking wh-questions. In another study by Rodriguez (2005) on the literacy practices of four Dominican families and their six children living in New York who had language impairments, she indicated that two of the children were preschoolers. In this study, a mom described how her young children would not go to sleep unless she read to them. The researcher also noted that if the families had books, they were not usually displayed openly but kept in a drawer or cabinet.

This literature provides some very limited information regarding the qualities or attributes of print based literacy interactions between parents and their children.

However, it is hard to tell to what degree the participating mothers elaborated as they read to their children, their level of interaction during story sharing, their affect, or to what degree they encouraged their children to help tell the story. While other print based interactions are mentioned, no specific information was given on the attributes of these interactions.

In summary, while the small body of existing literature indicates that some parents who are Latino and have children with speech and language impairments are engaging in story sharing and other print based interactions with them, we know little about the attributes of these interactions (Rodriguez, 2005). It is possible that the interactions of these parents with their children are similar to those between parents who are Latino who have children with typical development, in that their interactions may not primarily incorporate books, and may involve the use a more narrative style when they do use books (Melzi & Caspe, 2005).

### **Direct Literacy Teaching**

In addition to storybook sharing and other print based interactions, direct teaching of print and phonological concepts by parents is prevalent among emergent literacy interactions in some families (Farver et al., 2013). It is important to remember that storybook sharing and literacy teaching are two distinct emergent literacy interactions that may link separately to different emergent literacy skills (Sénéchal et al., 1998). Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002), in a five-year longitudinal study of parents' efforts, found

that parents' home teaching of reading and writing to their children directly impacts emergent literacy skills, while their storybook sharing boosts oral language skills.

Home literacy teaching interactions have been defined in numerous ways. These interactions have been defined as being those in which the parent uses informal/indirect or formal/direct methods to teach their child print related early literacy skills such as alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, word identification, or writing (Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003; Neumann & Neumann, 2010; Neumann, Hood, & Ford, 2013; Neumann, Hood, & Neumann, 2009; Sénéchal et al., 1998). Foster, Lamburt, Abot-Shim, McCarthy, and Franze (2005) used the term "parent-mediated learning activities" (p. 30) to describe these interactions. For the purposes of this study, literacy teaching interactions were defined as informal and formal instances where parents instruct their children in the area of letter names or sounds, print awareness, phonemic awareness skills, or writing (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Neumann & Neumann, 2010; Neumann, Hood, & Ford, 2013; Neumann, Hood, & Neumann, 2009; Sawyer et al., 2013).

### **Importance of Parent Literacy Teaching**

Literacy teaching interactions, described above, can have positive impacts. According to Lonigan et al. (2008), the parents implemented emergent literacy interventions designed for families with low SES had a positive impact on children's cognitive skills in general, and on oral language skills, including grammar and vocabulary. When parents engage in teaching activities with their children that involve printing, letter naming, looking at picture dictionaries, and reading words, these



interactions have a positive impact on their children's orthographic and other emergent literacy skills, more so than when parents engage in storybook sharing alone (Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Sénéchal et al., 1998). In fact, according to Levy et al. (2006), it is the level at which parents engage in interactions based on reading and writing practice, not storybook sharing, that lead to their children's growth in print knowledge and writing conventions. Additionally, Hood et al. (2008) found that direct literacy teaching, not storybook sharing, had more influence over children's emergent literacy skills. Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) found in their study involving children in middle class homes, that parental literacy teaching during storybook sharing predicted their kindergarten children's print knowledge. According to McGinty and Justice (2009), the interactions in the home environment can influence print knowledge, in spite of SLI, especially when the children also have attention difficulties. The ways parents who are Latino provide direct literacy teaching to their children who have speech and language delays may also influence their development.

### **Direct Literacy Teaching in Latino Families**

Just as there is more to emergent literacy interactions than storybook sharing in middle class families, the same is true of families of Latino origin. These families also engage in interactions that involve their direct teaching of emergent literacy skills to their children (Billings, 2009; Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Farver et al., 2013; Perry et al., 2008; Santos & Alfred, 2011; Saenz & Felix, 2007; Sénéchal et al., 1998). This fact runs counter to the expectations of many educators (Billings, 2009).

Saenz and Felix (2007) surveyed English-speaking parents of Latino heritage using questionnaires. In these families, 73% of the parents directly worked with their children daily on word reading, and 55% helped their children learn to write words. Some of the parents who reported referring to print in the environment in the Lynch (2008) study were from Latino backgrounds. Perry et al. (2008) tracked how a group of 13 Latino parents participating in a family literacy program as they utilized family literacy packs sent home with their children. They found that these parents sometimes used a style of direct teaching referred to by them and other Latino parents as *castigo*, or drills. They drilled their children in letter sound, syllable, and word identification. While these parents did use drill, they also tried to blend in an element of playfulness into interactions. Sometimes the literacy teaching was in the context of games, some of which incorporated physical activity. In Gillanders and Jimenez's (2004) study of Mexican American families who helped their kindergarten children to be successful in reading, this mix between formal and informal was also evident. More formal activities included workbook completion, writing the names of family members, the reading of ads, and sounding out words. Parents worked on decoding by teaching their children how to read syllables. Another formal literacy teaching interaction involved parents directing children to write *planas*. One mother taught her daughter to write her name by writing it on a page for her, then having her daughter copy it from left to right until it filled the page. Informal activities were more game like. For example, one parent in the same study had her child chant words starting with particular sounds as he jumped rope.

While teaching has been documented as being both formal and direct, as well as informal and entertaining, it can also take the form of demonstration as it did in the study by Perry et al. (2008) mentioned above. Santos and Alfred (2011) found that some of their GED students also used demonstration. One student explained that he writes first and then lets his daughter try to write.

Most of the children in these studies were learning English, so instruction by parents was often bilingual. In the Perry et al. (2008) study, parents used both English and Spanish. Dual language use was also incorporated into the literacy teaching of the parents in a Gillanders and Jimenez (2004) study. Farver et al. (2013) noted that the parents they surveyed used more English in formal literacy teaching than Spanish.

While the focus on this research was on the interactions between parents and their children, it was important not to overlook the fact that other family members are often involved. Perry et al. (2008) noted that parents often had siblings take a prominent role in literacy teaching, including active participation in games while they watched. Farver et al. (2013) also noted that extended family members may be involved in literacy teaching.

### **Direct Literacy Teaching by Parents of Children with Speech or Language Impairments**

Some of the recent literature on direct literacy teaching interactions addresses interactions between children with speech or language impairments and their parents (Justice, Softka, & McGinty, 2007; Sawyer et al., 2013). Children with SLI sometimes need more targeted and explicit teaching to benefit their emergent literacy skills than do children who are developing typically (Justice et al., 2007). There is little recent

literature that provides detailed descriptions of the attributes of literacy teaching interactions between parents and their children with speech language impairments. However, Sawyer et al. (2013) did document that some parents within this group incorporate some literacy teaching into storybook sharing, but they also note that this interaction type did not seem to influence their children's print knowledge. Skibbe, Justice, and Bowles (2011) looked at storybook sharing and found that the mothers in the study embedded phonological lessons into these interactions. Interestingly however, Skibbe et al. (2008) had found that the parents in their study exhibited fewer literacy practices in general than parents of typical children. This research corroborates previous survey based research by Marvin and Wright (1997) that indicates that parents of children with speech language impairments, while providing exposure to print, do not engage in as many print based interactions or talk much about print during this exposure, when compared with parents of children with typical development. Because some children benefit from direct literacy teaching (Levy et al., 2006; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002), it would seem that professionals could benefit from knowing what kind of direct literacy teaching parents are already doing with their children who have speech language impairment before attempting to implement home based interventions.

### **Direct Literacy Teaching by Parents who are Latino and Have Children with Speech or Language Impairments**

Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009) indicate that some parents from Latino backgrounds engage in direct literacy teaching interactions with their children who have speech or language impairments. The interactions described in this study involved one

parent who described methods she used to show her preschool child how to handle storybooks and how she asked and answered questions about their content. One of the parents did not describe direct literacy teaching but noted that her child was learning from observing his older siblings doing their schoolwork. These parents, according to Kummerer (2010), may be interacting more indirectly than directly with their children and may involve the use of environmental print, craft or recipe books, or simply allowing their children to observe them paying bills or making to do lists. Many of the interactions in these families could be more related to conversation than to direct literacy teaching (Kummerer, 2010).

In summary, observations and interviews with a small group of parents spread among several studies provide some insight into the direct literacy teaching interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language difficulties. Book handling instruction and questioning about story content take place in some families. Some of these parents engage in direct literacy teaching, and other parents simply allow their children to observe their own or older siblings' literacy practices (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009).

### **Conversation-Based Interactions**

Another type of interaction noted in the literature that was considered in this research was those interactions centered around and involving conversation. The interactions considered under this category were those such as reminiscing about past experiences and casual talk, as well as storytelling, in which the parent and child verbally engage during routines or special time together (Billings, 2009; Caspe, 2009; Dieterich,

Assel, Swank, Smith, & Landry, 2006; Leva, Sparks, & Reese, 2012). Singing was also be considered as a type of verbal or conversational interaction for this study, as it has been noted by several case study researchers, as part of oral interactions related to literacy (Rodriguez, 2005; Romero-Contreras, 2006).

**Importance.** Conversational interactions between parents and their children can have a strong influence on children's language development (Zimmerman et al., 2009). Verbal interactions, the verbal scaffolding they involve, and the environment that supports them are directly and indirectly related to the development of children's formal literacy skills. Comprehension, oral language, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, word decoding, and narrative skills can all be impacted by the conversation based interactions parents have with their children (Burgess et al., 2002; Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg, & Poe, 2003; Dieterich et al., 2006; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Justice et al., 2010; Leva, Sparks, & Reese, 2012; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Even storybook sharing primarily benefits children's oral language skills (Lonigan et al., 2008).

One oral communication interaction shown to correlate with later reading skill is conversation between parents and their children about past events. Leyva et al. (2008) found that when mothers from low socioeconomic backgrounds asked open-ended questions and otherwise promoted more elaborative conversations when discussing shared past events with their children, the children themselves elaborated more when they told about past events independently. In a 2012 study investigating the connection between phonological awareness, mothers' book reading practices, and reminiscing

practices in Head Start, Leyva, Sparks, and Reese discovered that the quality of mothers' elaborative reminiscing predicted phonological awareness skills at the end of preschool.

When considering the conversation based or oral communication interactions parents who are Latino have with their children, it is important to keep in mind that their native language is an important asset in helping their children with emergent literacy (Perry, 2012). This importance is due to the fact that when Spanish-speaking families continue using Spanish with their children, even as they are learning English, it can enable them to maintain and further develop their skills in Spanish, which can be important for optimal development of language (Guiberson, Barrett, Jancosek, & Itano, 2006).

**Conversation-based interactions in families of Latino origin.** Conversation based interactions between parents of Latino origin and their children are common (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). One conversation- based interaction documented as being prominent in these families is the practice of oral storytelling (Billings, 2009; Riojas-Cortez, Flores, Smith, & Clark, 2003). Research evidence relating to this interaction is contradictory, however. While some researchers indicate that storytelling is part of the traditions of many Latino families in general, other researchers have found that they engage in less frequent storytelling with their children when they are infants (Barrueco, López, & Miles, 2007). In addition, some researchers indicate that these parents may also engage in less storytelling with their preschool children than do parents from other ethnic groups (Nord et al., 1999). Some researchers indicate however that many stories, called *corridos*, are sung (Espinoza-Herold, 2007), and the storytelling analyzed in the

literature above did not take this kind of story into account, or the child ages at which these *corridos* are commonly used.

Discussing past events is another important oral interaction parents who are Latino have with their children. Children's narrative (storytelling) skills have been shown to correlate with later literacy skills (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp, & Wolf, 2004). The ways in which parents support their children's narrative skills during conversations can influence these narrative skills. Leva, Sparks, and Reese (2012) found that, when comparing the frequency and quality of the elaborative reminiscing of the parents who were Latino with that of the parents who were of European or African American origin, there was no significant difference between the two groups. In other words, this research indicated that compared to families who are from majority backgrounds, there were no deficits noted in the elaborative reminiscing present in families who are not from majority backgrounds. Interestingly, a previous study by Leyva et al. (2008) found that the mothers with a Latino background had been less elaborative in conversations with their children about their behavior than with other topics. Melzi, Schick, and Kennedy (2011) compared the way 32 middle class mother-child dyads in Peru and 32 middle class mother-child dyads in New York City engaged in shared past event conversations and storybooks. Specifically, they looked at their elicitation styles in each kind of interaction. They found that most of the mothers of Peruvian heritage scaffolded their conversations with their children about past events by asking them questions, encouraging their children to take the role of narrator in the conversations without elaborating themselves.



Another oral tradition in many Latino homes is the use of *dichos*. *Dichos* are short sayings that communicate a moral message, such as proverbs (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Their use occurs within the context of normal family communication and they are often used to support children through difficult situations. Espinoza-Herold (2007) noted how *dichos* are part of many Latino parents' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). *Dichos* consist of sayings such as, "Los dichos de los viejitos son evangelios chiquitos" [The sayings of our elders are small gospels.] (Espinoza-Herold, 2007). Sánchez, Plata, Grosso, and Leird (2010) described how dichos were used by a school to encourage families to conduct family literacy activities in one study. They mentioned the following dichos common in the homes of many Latino families:

El que persevera alcanza. [He who perseveres, accomplishes his goal.]

El que siembra, cosecha. [He who cultivates, will harvest.]

Lo que bien se aprende nunca se olvida. [That which someone learns well, one never forgets.] (p. 245)

While some researcher claim that parents who are Latino may not talk much with their children about ongoing events, or consider children as worthy conversational partners (Langdon, 2008), other researchers describe conversations as common, noting that children are encouraged by their parents to communicate their emotions and experiences (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990).

**Conversation-based interactions in families with a child with speech or language impairments.** Conversations between parents and their children who have

speech language impairments can be qualitatively different from those with children exhibiting typical language development. Though many do not, some preschoolers with speech or language that does not involve cognitive deficits can have more problems with conversation than do typical children (Bishop, Chan, Adams, Hartley, & Weir, 2000). Children who have phonological deficits and also have speech or language impairments without cognitive impairments often have increased difficulties, and even when parents can understand their children's words, their communicative attempts still sometimes do not make sense, and often their conversations break down (Yont, Hewitt, & Miccio, 2002).

**Conversation-based interactions in families who are Latino and have children with speech or language impairments.** The available body of research into conversation based interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech language impairments is small but informative. It is still important to acknowledge that Latino parents can and do draw on their own Spanish literacy skills in their efforts to engage their children in conversational literacy interactions (Perry, 2012). Rodriguez's (2005) chapter detailing the language and literacy practices of several New York families of Dominican origin who had children with disabilities including speech and language impairments, though it did not provide details about the conversations they had with their children, did indicate that singing was often part of their verbal interactions. The most recent research indicates that some parents who are Latino and have children with atypical language development sing to them, communicate with them

during routines, and may engage in verbal interactions that contain many yes no questions, or commands (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009).

### **Language Teaching Interactions**

In addition to engaging their children in conversation, print, and print teaching interactions, some parents engage in interactions during which they formally or informally teach their children receptive and expressive language skills. While closely related to verbal and conversation based interactions, language teaching interactions will also be considered. Although most language instruction by parents occurs naturally through conversational interactions (Rogoff, 1990), some parents may do so in an intentional way. For this study, the language teaching interactions discussed were those interactions in which a parent informally or formally, intentionally or unintentionally instructs his or her child using practices that build their receptive or expressive language skills. When a parent labeled items or actions, defined words, gave directions on how to complete a task, tried to encourage verbal choice making, elicited longer utterances, asks the child to repeat words, sounds, or phrases, these interactions were considered as language teaching interactions (Dieterich et al., 2006; Kaiser, Hancock, & Hester, 1998; Rogoff, 1990; Romero-Contreras, 2004).

**Importance.** There is little in the research literature to indicate that parents' formal intentional teaching of receptive and expressive language skills is essential to the language development of children who are middle class and developing typically. Some of these teaching practices however, can be beneficial. Some parents teach their children a second language or sign in intentional ways. Some mothers from families who have

low SES have learned to teach their children to use more decontextualized speech, by using more of this speech during storybook sharing (Morgan & Goldstein, 2004). Similar types of language teaching have also been reported as present in families of Latino origin.

**Direct language teaching interactions in families of Latino origin.** Romero-Contreras (2004) found that the four parents in a qualitative study conducted in Mexico taught their children names with which to label the dramatic play materials provided them, and provided verbal directions to guide them through play scenarios. While most of the parents seemed to use labeling as a way to interact within the play, a couple of parents did appear to use this labeling interaction as a way to teach new vocabulary. Also in this study, Romero-Contreras (2004) noted that more educated parents with middle or higher SES used toys such as paper, crayons, and puzzles in their language based play routines.

In addition, a study by Rodriguez-Valls, Montoya, and Valenzuela (2014) explained how parents who were migrant farmworkers in California participated in activities to promote their children's biliteracy and bilingualism, in an effort to prepare them for kindergarten. The one-month program was coordinated by a school district, a university, and a local education agency. Teachers and tutors who were committed to culturally responsive pedagogy, worked collaboratively with parents. Parents learned ways to build their children's language skills during the summer program, and continued to use these at home during and after the program. These methods, in respect to language development support, involved the use of technology, and instruction in both Spanish and English vocabulary.

Some parents who are Latino, especially when they belong to indigenous groups, do not engage in language teaching. Rather, these parents may indirectly build the communication skills of their children by allowing them to observe them as they complete tasks and routines, or by guiding their children nonverbally or through judicious use of verbal directions (Coppens et al., 2014; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009; Rogoff, 1990).

**Direct language teaching interactions by parents whose children have speech or language impairments.** Most of the literature that relates to language teaching by parents of children with speech or language impairments involves parents' use of techniques that they learned from therapists and researchers. The practice of teaching parents language intervention techniques to use with their children has become increasingly prevalent, as professionals recognize that children benefit more when parents are involved in their children's therapy, than when they are not, especially if the "teaching" by the parent is embedded in the child's natural routine (Hemmeter & Kaiser, 1994; Kaiser, 1997). The practice of incorporating parents into the language intervention therapy of their children has been practiced since at least the 1970s (Hemmeter & Kaiser, 1994). One example of parents functioning as language teachers for their children is in Enhanced Milieu Teaching (EMT). EMT involves parents helping their children develop language skills using interesting events that naturally occur in the home (Peterson, Carta, & Greenwood, 2005). Research into the effectiveness of teaching EMT and its components to parents has been conducted since 1983 (Kaiser et al., 1998). Among a wide number of other studies, in one single subject study by Peterson et al. (2005), parents learned responsive interaction and incidental language teaching skills, and

continued to use these skills at follow up. One remarkable feature of this study is that these families that had multiple risk factors such as having a very low SES status, environmental risk factors such as cocaine use in pregnancy, being a single parent, having a low education level, being a member of a minority racial group, or being a victim of domestic violence. Parents in this study used descriptive statements, imitation, language expansion, modeling, giving a direction and modeling for the child, and using wait time to allow their children enough time to respond to or initiate a verbal interaction. Other parents who have children with both language and developmental /physical disabilities have also engaged in language teaching after learning to increase their children's functional communication behaviors, such as making requests (Tait, Sigafos, Woodyatt, O'Reilly, & Guilio, 2004).

**Direct language teaching interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with atypical language development.** Though limited, the literature does document some language teaching interactions between some parents who are Latino, and their children with speech or language impairments. Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009) described how one Latino parent who had a child with language impairment explained how she helped him. She labeled things for her child, expanded on what he said, asked questions, repeated back what the child had said, and engaged in other oral interactions. One parent described being engaged in fewer conversation based interactions during play than she did during the rest of the day during routines. Another parent, during her child's therapy sessions, gave a great number of behavioral commands, and asked a large number of yes, no questions, until the therapists taught her techniques

such as self-talk, parallel talk, providing choices, and expanding her child's language. In another study by Rodriguez (2005), where five of the seven children in the six Dominican families participating had language or speech impairments, one mother modeled oral storytelling while she drew accompanying pictures, then encouraged her six and seven year olds to do the same. She would then ask them questions to help them further develop the story, thus extending their vocabulary and increasing their utterance length. In another study, parents of children with Downs Syndrome in Mexico learned to improve their children's language skills by having sessions with them at home through the use of balanced turn taking and responsiveness (Romero Contreras, 2008).

In summary, language teaching does occur in families, but there seems to be more available literature relating to its occurrence, after training, in the homes of children with speech or language impairments (Hemmeter & Kaiser, 1994; Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2006; Peterson et al., 2005; Romero Contreras, 2008; Tait et al., 2004). There is less information available on language teaching among Latino parents with children with speech or language impairments in the home environment without training.

### **Influences of Emergent Literacy Interactions**

In addition to gaining a deeper and more complete understanding of the ways parents from Latino backgrounds engage in emergent literacy interactions with their children with speech or language impairments, another goal of this research was to understand how sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors may influence these interactions. It also seemed important to learn what other characteristics and experiences of the parents and their children may influence interactions between them. To that end, influences

documented in the literature that may prove to be influential to the emergent literacy interactions described in this study are discussed below.

### **Sociocultural and Language Socialization Factors**

**Culture and contexts.** For this study, sociocultural and language socialization influences of the emergent literacy interactions within the homes of the participating families were considered. The concept of culture one adopts is important in such a study. There has been a great deal of confusion and disagreement over the definition of culture, and some definitions contradict one another (Jahoda, 2012). In light of that reality, Jahoda (2012) suggests researchers whose goals depend to some extent on a definition of culture, choose one and explain that choice. González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) explained that rather than focusing on conceptualizing students and their families as gathered in various separate cultural boxes, educators should more closely focus on the daily activities or practices of individual families and the richness that can be found there. This funds of knowledge approach to culture and the families of Latino origin, is explained below.

**Views of culture and funds of knowledge.** The term *funds of knowledge* refers to an ethnographical approach to learning about children and families that is rooted in Social Contextual Theory (Daniel-White, 2002). “. . . Lived experiences become validated as a source of knowledge” (para. 26). Luis Moll first coined the term *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). The funds of knowledge concept “refers to the historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household’s functioning



and well-being” (González et al., 2005, p. 219). In this study, the funds of knowledge strength-based approach to viewing, reflecting upon, and presenting the emergent literacy interactions within the Latino families who participate will be used to see what parents know (Mercado, 2005; Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Moll et al., 1992). This approach is very helpful for seeing and understanding what is already present in the interactions between the parent-child dyads (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2005; Zentella, 2005). This funds of knowledge approach to understanding and researching family practices and interaction centers upon a view of culture as rich, dynamic, fluid, and often varied across families of even the same racial background. Focusing on the strengths, resources, and knowledge of families can be viewed as an antidote of sorts for deficit model thinking (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Zentella, 2005). An asset model can function as a lens through which culture can be viewed in a different way than the way it has been viewed in the past, and in a way that contradicts past assumptions that have been made about families who are Latino and live in poverty. Interventions based on a view of families as sources of social and cognitive wealth, in spite of their financial difficulties, can have immense impact on literacy skills of children (Carter, Chard, & Pool, 2009; Mercado, 2005). Using this strength-based approach helps researchers truly understand what is present in families, without simply looking for what is missing (Zentella, 2005).

Emergent literacy interactions are influenced by culture. Culture, dynamic and changing as it is, influences the language and literacy interactions in families, including their emergent language and literacy practices, and how children are taught by their parents to use them (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

Heath (1983), in her landmark ethnographic study of children learning to talk, read, and write in two communities in North Carolina (one rural and one urban) provided the field with important information about literacy practices across two communities that differed in race and economic status. One community was of African American origin, and the other was of primarily European American origin. Heath explained that it was not race but the variation in the structure of families, chosen roles, and views about what childhood should be that influenced their language and literacy practices.

Children of Roadville and Tracktown had different ways of communicating, because their communities had different social legacies and ways of behaving in face-to-face interactions. (Heath, 1983, p. 11)

Some of the available literature is explicit in explaining how language socialization is a factor in emergent literacy interactions. Ochs, Solomon, and Sterponi (2005) explored a speech language intervention for an elementary age child in India who had Autism. They found that the ways the direct teaching interactions were used were influenced by the accepted and practiced styles of the dominant cultural group there. Ochs et al. (2005) indicate that the characteristics like whether and how child directed speech is used, and the positioning of the child for face-to-face versus side-by-side interactions are influenced by a family's culture. Some children's disabilities cause mismatch between the commonly accepted cultural style and the style in which the child can best communicate (Ochs et al., 2005). When the child in this study was prompted to interact within a face-to-face therapy session that involved direct teaching of phonemes, he avoided eye contact, spoke little, and was incorrect in his responses. In a direct

teaching session with his mother, Soma Mukhopadhyay, worked with him sitting side by side, and allowed him to type his responses as she prompted him repeatedly and praised him. In this interaction, he was able to use a keyboard to answer fill in the blank questions that required a higher level of literacy than did the phoneme exercise that he was unable to complete correctly in face-to-face interaction. Mukhopadhyay named her strategy the *Rapid Prompting Method* (Mukhopadhyay, 2008).

### **Socioeconomic Status and Material Resources**

Both sociocultural factors and poverty influence the educational achievement of language minority children (Gonzalez, 2001). One way socioeconomic status influences language skills is by affecting the interactions parents have with their children (Raviv, Messenich, & Morrison, 2004). Raviv et al. (2004) compared socioeconomic status measures with observational measures of parenting in a study that enabled them to form a picture of parental sensitivity and household cognitive stimulation. They then looked for relationships between the results of observational and SES measures and the results of language ability measures for three year-old children from the same families. Using hierarchical regression analysis, they looked for relationships between maternal education, the income to needs ratio, observation measures, and maternal sensitivity, with child language development. They found that both the income to needs ratio and maternal education influenced cognitive stimulation in the home, and maternal sensitivity. These factors in turn influenced the three year olds receptive, expressive, and concept assessment results. The researchers also found that SES affected language development directly, in addition to influencing parenting practices. They did not

examine other influences they said might be pertinent, such as genetic influences, and elements like neighborhood and child care quality.

While poverty does affect the literacy interactions within families, the literature shows that it does not automatically preclude the existence of shared reading interactions and certainly does not indicate that the parents do not care at all about their children's literacy development (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Foster et al., 2005). For example, some families who have low socioeconomic status report parent lead literacy enrichment activities and storybook sharing (LaForett & Mendez, 2010; B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009).

At the same time, social risk factors like depression, which often goes hand in hand with poverty, can be influential (LaForett & Mendez, 2010). Paulson, Keefe, and Leiferman (2009) found that 23.5 % of mothers and 19.7% of fathers with nine-month-old children were depressed as indicated on a CES-D self-report depression scale (Radoff, 1977). In addition, they found that depressed parents, especially fathers, read less to their children at age two, resulting in children's expressive vocabulary delays.

Both social risk factors found in poverty and home literacy practices affect emergent literacy skills of the children in these families (Foster et al., 2005). According to Raviv et al. (2004), in addition to considering the ways poverty might affect parenting interactions that influence language development of children, it may also be important to consider maternal education, parental knowledge and beliefs, and child factors that may mediate the effects of poverty.

**Mother's Education Level**

The educational level of mothers has been found to be a very strong influence on the characteristics of various emergent literacy interactions (Curenton & Justice, 2008; B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009). Educational attainment of a mother influences her beliefs, which in turn influence interactions related to emergent literacy, and this seems to be true for poorer (Curenton & Justice, 2008) as well as more moderate income mothers (Weigel et al., 2006).

Curenton and Justice's (2008) study included 45 mothers of preschool children living in Appalachia. They investigated the relationships between beliefs around storybook sharing and other literacy practices, the mothers' level of education, and their children's preliteracy skills. They found that the mothers' level of education was an indicator of the degree to which they valued storybook sharing, their ideas about how it should be conducted, and conceptions of how children should verbally participate. Interestingly, they found that the mothers' beliefs did not influence the frequency at which they engaged in other activities related to literacy. These mothers' expressed their beliefs in the manner in which they shared stories, and had more influence over their children's print concepts and reading convention knowledge than did the frequency of literacy activities they reported. The mothers that valued storybook sharing also thought that it should be a fun and interactive experience for the children. Both the more and less highly educated mothers reported they engaged in literacy activities with about the same frequency.

In their longitudinal study of the language and literacy environments of 1,046 families of low socioeconomic status with preschool English-speaking children over the course of three years, B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al. (2009) found that the quality of the experiences related to literacy was predicted by the mothers' education. In addition, the more educated mothers who were older and had verbal skills at a higher level of sophistication provided a more didactic and responsive type of stimulation for their children.

In their investigation into the literacy related beliefs and practices of 79 middle class mothers of mostly European heritage, Weigel et al. (2006) also found that the mothers' approach to conducting literacy activities varied according to the educational level they had attained. "Facilitative" mothers who had more education tended to feel that it was important to engage preschool children at home in teaching activities. Less educated "Conventional" mothers tended to believe preschoolers were simply too young to benefit from parent conducted activities at home, and that schools, not parents, should be teaching reading. In spite of being of higher socioeconomic status than mothers whose families are poor, these Conventional mothers said that they often lacked reading materials or a quiet place in which to read and that they had difficulty getting their children engaged in storybook sharing. Facilitative mothers played more games with, told more stories, and sang more songs with their children than did Conventional mothers. Facilitative mothers reported enjoying reading more and writing more often in front of their children than did Conventional mothers. Children of more facilitative

mothers scored higher on measures of interest in reading and print knowledge than did children of more conventional mothers.

### **Parent Education Experiences**

In addition to education in traditional formats, family literacy education can have a strong influence on the emergent literacy interactions parents have with their children. For example, the results of one longitudinal program 2002 evaluation for the First 5 LA Family Literacy program in Los Angeles County found that the parents who attended more hours of parent education classes were observed to use a higher level of elaboration and decontextualized speech during storybook sharing than parents who attended fewer hours. These parents also read more books to their children and told them more stories (Quick et al., 2009).

### **Mothers' Philosophy of Reading Education**

In addition to the influences of socioeconomic status, and mothers' education, mothers' philosophy of reading education has been found to influence their emergent literacy interactions with their children (Debaryshe, Binder, & Buell, 2000). Debaryshe et al. (2000) did a follow up to a survey study that had been done when the 19 child participants were age two in which they surveyed the mothers when their children were five and six. Among the survey questions were two open ended ones asking parents for their thoughts about how children learn to read and write. While most parents were at least somewhat eclectic in the views illustrated by their answers on the whole, one group of parents' answers indicated more of a code-based philosophy, while another group's philosophy was more whole language based. The code oriented mothers indicated that

they thought it was important for children to learn to sound out words, read accurately, match sounds and letters, and learn rules for sounding out groups of letters. The meaning oriented group thought it was important that children figure out words using their previous knowledge and experiences, and by what makes sense in a sentence, as well as guessing. They thought that it was important for their children to understand the importance and uses of reading. Mothers who were more meaning oriented modeled reading frequently for their children, and engaged in more mother and child shared writing. More code -oriented mothers were more likely to mention going to the library. Again, most mothers endorsed a teaching approach that blended activities related to both code and meaning. Some mothers did not hold beliefs about reading education. It seems likely that parents who are Latino and have a child with speech or language impairment may hold their own informal philosophies of how children learn and should be taught how to read.

### **Child Factors**

This study, in addition to considering sociocultural factors that influence a parent's emergent literacy interactions with their children, also examined how characteristics of the children influence these interactions. This emphasis was present in the study because, in addition to showing the ways poverty, maternal education, and maternal beliefs about reading education influence emergent literacy interactions, the literature also shows that child factors influence these interactions. For example, preschool children's level of interest in reading influences the emergent literacy interactions of their mothers who responded to these interests (Deckner, Adamson, &



Bakeman, 2006; B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009; Weigel et al., 2006). Deckner et al. (2006), in their longitudinal study of 55 children and their mothers when their children were from 18 to 42 months old, found that children's interest and their mothers' conversational metalingual utterances rate (i.e., rate of child language and rephrasing prompts) during storybook sharing were strongly associated. These utterances directed and facilitated their children's attention to language during these interactions.

One unanticipated child related influence on emergent literacy interactions between mothers of lower SES and their children found in the literature was that of the child's gender. Caspe (2009) found that both English and Spanish mothers used more of a storytelling style that involved less interaction if their children were girls rather than boys.

### **Influences of Interactions between Parents and Children with Speech or Language Impairments**

Parent education can influence emergent literacy interactions between parents and their children with speech or language impairments. In one study, Kent-Walsh, Binger, and Hasham (2010) helped parents use augmentative communication devices with their children of African American and European American who had motor skill deficits that impeded their speech to engage in storybook sharing.

Characteristics of preschoolers with speech language impairments can influence the emergent literacy interactions parents have with them, and the success of these interactions (Justice et al., 2007; Skibbe et al., 2008; van Balkom, Verhoeven, & van Weedenburg, 2010; Yont et al., 2002). Sameroff (2009) detailed interactions whereby

the child's characteristics influenced the practices of the parents, and dubbed it "The Transactional Model of Development." van Balkom et al. (2010) noted in their study of the conversational interactions between mothers and their children with delayed language development that mothers of children with speech or language impairments used more topic refocusing, corrections, repetitions, and attention getting comments than did mothers of children whose language was developing typically. The mothers used these techniques because their children had difficulty with turn taking, starting or maintaining a conversational topic, using correct grammar and phonology, or frequently communicated nonverbally. When children have conversational difficulties, parents often repeat questions, ask more clarifying questions, use more repetitions, and rephrase what their child has said. They work to regain their child's attention when they converse with them, and these conversational difficulties can result in conversational breakdowns (van Balkom & Verhoeven, 2008; Yont et al., 2002). While there seems to be a need for more research into what influences the emergent literacy practices of parents whose children have speech and language impairments, it is also important to better understand what influences interactions between parents who are Latino, and their children.

### **Influences of Emergent Literacy Interactions among Latino Parents**

Like middle class and poorer U.S. families, emergent literacy interactions in families of Latino origin are affected by sociocultural and language socialization factors (Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Perry et al., 2008; Reese & Gallimore, 2000).

Understanding these factors may shed light on what influences the emergent literacy

interactions of parents of Latino origin who have children with speech or language impairments.

**Sociocultural and language socialization factors among Latino parents.**

Research indicates that there are sociocultural and language socialization factors that influence the ways parents who are Latino engage their children in emergent literacy interactions. Some literature explains that there are cultural factors that influence the ways communities educate children and the ways language is used in relation to that learning (Duque Arellanos, 1999; Paradise & Rogoff, 2009; Rogoff, 1990). For example, researchers have noted there can be a mismatch between families who are from indigenous Latino backgrounds, and the Western influenced schools in Costa Rica and Mexico (Duque Arellanos, 1999; Romero-Contreras, 2004, 2006). According to Paradise and Rogoff (2009) and Rogoff (1990) in some indigenous communities, children are expected to learn more from careful observation, even at early ages, than from verbal explanation, prompting, or assistance. Adults help children learn by allowing them to carefully observe, and later teaching them through guided participation. Adults do sometimes provide guidance verbally, but this is done sparingly (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009). Rogoff (1990) described how, rather than involving children in storytelling by recounting events directly to them, Mexican indigenous parents gathered within earshot of the children and engaged in storytelling in the early morning before the children had joined the rest of the family, and just after the children had gone to bed. Adults engaged in the storytelling at those times so that it would be likely that the children would overhear these interactions. In one study by Silva, Correa-Chavez, and Rogoff (2010),

children whose parents were of indigenous backgrounds attended to an explanation given to their older sibling about how to manipulate a novel toy, to such a level that they were able to manipulate it correctly better, more often, and without as many verbal instructions than could other children of Mexican backgrounds. In another study that did not consider whether the Mexican American mothers were from indigenous backgrounds, the mothers of low and middle SES used many directives to structure the storybook sharing. They also used descriptions and provided feedback more frequently than they asked *yes/no* or *wh* questions (E. T. Rodríguez, Hines, & Montiel, 2009).

Parents' cultural backgrounds can also be influential of emergent literacy interactions in other ways. Reese and Gallimore (2000) studied the cultural models parents from Mexico and Central America hold in regards to early literacy development. Their results indicate that the way parents learned to read as children when living in their home countries influenced the way they taught their children emergent literacy skills. One mother, for example, described how she was taught to read by putting together syllables. She then went on to describe her son's emerging ability to join syllables together. In these parents' childhoods, they were read to infrequently, did not have many literacy materials available, and did not have reading instruction until they were five or six years old. Their parents and teachers had not had these experiences or materials either. Some of their parents did not support education beyond elementary school, but all parents did not hold this reluctance. Gillanders and Jimenez (2004) point out how the literacy interactions the parents in their study used came from their own literacy learning experiences. One mother explained how her parents taught her the address where they

lived and her full name before she entered school, and how that motivated her to teach her child how to copy *planas* (copying words until they fill a page) and read syllables the way she learned.

Perry et al. (2008) note how parents often incorporate the emergent literacy practices they may have grown up with in their home countries, with the practices of their new country, to form their current literacy interactions with their children. One parent explained her reluctance to use a drill like style called *castigo* to teach her child emergent literacy skills, but used it anyway, experiencing some resistance from their children. Adaption to the practices of the new culture is noted in Saenz and Felix's (2007) study of the literacy practices of parents who were Latino and living in Southern California and spoke English. These parents adopted the literacy practices most commonly practiced in the U.S. such as frequent storybooks sharing.

Reese and Gallimore (2000) noted that some parents who are of Latino origin did not see their children's nascent attempts to read and write as valid steps towards literacy. Rather, they found these attempts amusing. Kummerer et al. (2007) noted a similar attitude in the mothers of the children with speech or language impairments who participated in her study. Reese and Gallimore (2000) did note how old and new beliefs around literacy could exist among members of the same family. One father explained how he thought reading to children should be done when they entered school, while the mother explained that she had changed her mind about that. The reason the mother gave for her change in opinion was related to her older daughter's entry into public school. When older siblings started asking for books, and to visit the library, this changed and

added new emergent literacy interactions within this family and many of the other families in the study. Having older siblings entering kindergarten influenced mothers to read more books to their preschool age children. One mother explained that she noticed the expectations around storybook sharing that the school had for her older child, and decided that she would begin reading to her younger children at an earlier age. She said, “One always learns from the culture here, right?” (Reese & Gallimore, 2000, p. 125). The parents in the Reese and Gallimore (2000) study chose to adopt a new cultural model when they moved to the U.S., and this change was further spurred by the demands made by the schools of their older children. They were quite responsive to schools’ requests that they engage in storybook sharing with their children.

This positive influence of schools’ expectation on parents’ emergent literacy interactions with their children was also noted by Gillanders and Jimenez’s (2004) look into the literacy practices of Mexican American parents who facilitate their children’s success with literacy in kindergarten. Perry et al. (2008) note that the 13 parents in their study were determined to support events around literacy that would help their children succeed in school. Billings (2009) found that parents who were Latino in her study felt that fine motor and oral literacy skills, as well as good behavior were important school readiness. Having some early facility with reading was ranked as less important among the needed skills, but the parents were open to change because of their desire for the school success of their children, even if that meant changing the understandings they had acquired from their own childhood literacy experiences, and their role in their own children’s school readiness.

The language the parent uses in those interactions also influences emergent literacy interactions between parents of Latino heritage and their children living in the U.S. Some mothers of Latino origin living in North Carolina cannot read Spanish (Gill, 2010). Their facility with their own language versus English sometimes motivates parents' emergent literacy interactions. Some parents may choose to speak Spanish only with their children to preserve their children's ability to converse with relatives who only speak Spanish (Gill, 2010). One important factor to keep in mind is that not all people who are Latino speak Spanish or English. There are a great number of indigenous communities in Mexico, so some immigrant parents may speak in languages such as Mixteco, Triqui, Otomi, Zapoteco, Purepecha, or Nahuatl, instead of only Spanish or English (East Coast Migrant Head Start, 2007; Gill, 2010). In a 2007 East Coast Migrant Head Start Project report on their Indigenous Language project, 30% of the 26 parents they interviewed reported knowing an indigenous language, though all of them were also fluent in Spanish (East Coast Migrant Head Start, 2007).

While some parents with Latino backgrounds are interested in adopting more or new emergent literacy interactions, their motivation in doing so is not always obvious or expected. Reese and Gallimore (2000) noted how one mother explained that her primary goal in engaging in storybook sharing was to impart moral lessons to her children, and that 41% of the other mothers voiced the same motivation. They wanted their children to know what is good and bad. Only 27% of the mothers read to their children to stimulate their children's positive attitudes towards reading. Another 21% did so because that is what their children enjoyed or wanted. In their study, Perry et al. (2008) noted that many

of the parents also wanted their children to gain moral lessons from literacy interactions. Specifically, they wanted their children to learn about cooperation, equity, sharing, and taking turns.

**Mother's education level.** As with families of lower socioeconomic and Middle Class status, according to one available study, the educational level of Latino mothers influences their emergent literacy interactions with their children (Caspe, 2009). Caspe (2009) found that mothers that had more education participated in more family literacy interactions. While Caspe did find a mother's educational level was influential, child factors were also at play. It was the gender of her child, not the mothers' education level that was related to their book sharing style. They tended to adopt a more elaborative style with their sons.

**Material resources/SES.** As far as the influence of material resources or SES, some of the literature is helpful. Santos and Alfred (2011) noted that the mostly Latino parents taking adult basic education classes with the researcher had difficulty balancing their low income jobs with their education. Thus, the lack of material resources that made it necessary for them to continue working, affected the time the parents had to engage in literacy interactions with their children. In another study, E. T. Rodríguez, Hines, et al. (2009) found that Mexican American mothers of lower SES used fewer utterances that were decontextualized (referred to events and objects not in the books) during storybook sharing than did Mexican American mothers of middle income. In addition, they gave less positive feedback during the storybook sharing. In Purcell-Gates's (2013) ethnographic study of migrant farmworkers and their family literacy



practices, she noted how the Migrant Head Start teachers assumed that the reason why the books they gave them were not evident during home visits from one year to the next, was because the parents did not value books. In fact, the workers shared with the researcher that they did not bring them from farm to farm because they felt that did not have room for them in their vehicles.

### **Influences among Parents who are Latino and have a Child with Speech or Language Impairments**

There is little available literature related to the influences of emergent literacy interactions between parents who are Latino, and their children with speech or language impairments. Some research addresses child factors such as their expressive language skills (Kummerer et al., 2007). Unfortunately, the literature reviewed from the last 15 years does not directly address other factors that could influence emergent literacy interactions in these families.

**Sociocultural factors.** Latino parents whose children do have speech language impairments may have adapted their views of literacy practices since immigrating to the U.S. The more they have adapted to U.S. culture, the more they adopt the language and literacy interactions styles here, such as storybook sharing, and the more literacy materials they have at home (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006).

**Parental factors.** Several parental factors can influence emergent literacy interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language impairments. Parental beliefs or attitudes towards reading education that cultural adaption may entail, and participation in parent education, may influence emergent

literacy interactions parents who are Latino have with their children. For example, Binger et al. (2008) taught parents who were of Latino heritage how to facilitate multiword alternative communication devise responses for their children who had oral motor difficulties that impeded their speech during storybook sharing. According to the researchers, the fact that the participating parents were high school graduates who spoke English as their first language may have explained some of the success of the endeavor. Parents who are Latino and participate in their child's speech therapy can also incorporate knowledge gained from this participation into their emergent literacy interactions (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009).

We know that a mother's level of education can also influence her emergent literacy interactions (Curenton & Justice, 2008). Again, 41% of adults residing in the U.S. who are Latino have not graduated from high school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). It is unclear in the available literature to what degree a Latino mother's level of education influences her interactions with her child with speech or language impairments.

Though little in the available research indicates to what degree school expectations influence the emergent literacy interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language difficulties, it does indicate that parental beliefs and attitudes about emergent literacy can be influential. Kummerer et al.'s (2007) study involved parents that Kummerer was serving as a speech therapist. The speech and language needs of the children were of primary concern to the children's parents. When asked about the importance of their children's emergent literacy, they were less concerned. The researchers indicated that this lack of concern influenced the emergent

literacy interactions that took place, as did the fact that the parents may not have realized what kinds of emergent literacy skills children could be developing at their children's ages. The mothers seemed to believe that literacy learning among preschoolers takes place through observation. Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2006) noted that these parents did not understand at first the value of language interventions that were play based. These parents also perceived their children's language progress and receptive language abilities as stronger than they actually were upon measurement.

**Child factors specific to children who are Latino and have speech or language impairments.** The existing literature is unclear regarding the degree to which factors specific to children who are Latino and have speech or language impairments influence their parents' emergent literacy interactions. Parents in Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2006) did indicate that they thought their children were unmotivated to talk, but they did not expand on how that perception effected their interactions with their children. The two preschool children with communication difficulties in the Rodriguez (2005) study requested nightly storybook sharing, thus influencing their mother to comply, and this child related factor may also influence other parents.

In summary, in addition to the influence of maternal education and poverty, there are sociocultural and language socialization factors that influence the emergent literacy interactions of parents who are Latino and non-Latino parents (Raviv et al., 2004). Parents of Latino heritage whose children are developing typically may remember and apply methods of literacy instruction that they experienced growing up, but also may adapt to and incorporate practices such as story sharing that are common among majority

groups in the U.S. Their reasons for adopting these practices may not be those that would be expected, however (Brown & Lopez, 2013; Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Perry et al., 2008; Saenz & Felix, 2007; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). Older children in the home whose teachers expect them to be read to by their parents can influence their mothers to read aloud to their younger children more often, and at earlier ages (Reese & Gallimore, 2000). For Latino parents whose children are receiving speech therapy, the therapists' guidance and expectations can influence conversational and story sharing interactions (Kent-Walsh et al., 2010; Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2006). In addition to the sociocultural, language socialization, educational and material influences of parent child interactions, children who have speech or language impairments can influence parental practices. Children with speech and language impairment may be perceived as unmotivated to talk by their parents who are Latino, or they can request that they be read to frequently (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2006; Rodriguez, 2005).

Though rich, the available research centers on what was learned from relatively few participants. The dearth of available research on the influences of emergent interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language impairment exposes the need for further research in this area.

### **Summary**

A small body of available literature sheds light onto how parents who are Latino and who have children with speech or language impairments engage in emergent literacy interactions with them and what influences these interactions. Because this body of literature is so small, it was not only important to examine related research into emergent

literacy interactions between children with parents who are Latino, but also research focused on families whose children have typical language development, and interactions between parents and their children with language or speech impairments who do not have Latino backgrounds. There are both differences and similarities in the ways these parents engage in print, conversation based, and direct literacy teaching interactions. There are also differences in the parent and child factors that influence these interactions. The goal of this research was to understand both the interactions and their influences in the hopes of using this information as a foundation for future culturally relevant intervention partnerships between parents of Latino heritage, their children with speech language impairments, and early childhood professionals, especially those who provide intervention services.

### **Summary of Interactions**

Important information about of print based, direct teaching, conversation based, and language teaching emergent literacy interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language impairments can be gained from the most recent available research. Print based interactions between parents who are Latino and their children with speech or language impairments may involve those that are less based upon storybook sharing than with other print sources such as older sibling's homework, chores, and bill paying (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2006, 2009). Some Latino parents who have children with atypical language development read nightly to their children while asking open-ended questions and some may adopt more of a narrative style, as do some parents who are Latino and have children who are developing typically (Binger et al.,

2008; Melzi & Caspe, 2005; Rodriguez, 2005). Even when nightly reading is incorporated into the routine, the books used may be stored away from view (Rodriguez, 2005). The interactions of Latino parents with children who have communication difficulties could also mirror those of non-Latino parents who have children with speech or language impairments, and involve infrequent storybook sharing with a low level of emotional support (Skibbe et al., 2010).

The available research indicates that parents of Latino heritage with children with speech or language impairments sometimes engage in direct literacy teaching on book handling and writing, and blend this teaching into storybook sharing (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009; Sawyer et al., 2013).

In conversation-based interactions between parents from Latino backgrounds and their children with speech or language impairments, parents sometimes label things for their children, sing, expand their children's language, and ask questions (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009; Rodriguez, 2005). These interactions between these parents and their children may occur more during routines than play and may involve more directives (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009).

The available research on language teaching interactions between parents who are Latino and their children diagnosed with speech or language impairment notes that some parents label objects for their children, expand on their utterances, and repeat back to them what they have said. Some learn techniques such as asking open ended questions, parallel talk, and providing choices (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009). Others model storytelling, guiding their children in telling their own stories (Rodriguez, 2005).

### **Summary of Influences**

Available research on the various sociocultural, material, parent, and child factors that influence emergent literacy interactions between parents who are from Latino backgrounds and their children who have speech and language disorders provides limited insights for the researcher. Adding to this insight are explorations into the influences of emergent literacy interactions between parents who are not Latino and their children with speech and language difficulties, and between parents who are Latino and their children without disabilities.

Family structure and roles, as well as views about childhood can influence language and literacy practices of particular cultural groups (Heath, 1983). There may sometimes be a mismatch between the common teaching communication style adopted in a parent's culture and that which their child with additional special needs can tolerate or manage (Ochs et al., 2005). Poverty itself and the effects of poverty can also influence these interactions between parents and their children who have typical language development (Raviv et al., 2004). In addition, parental depression aggravated by poverty and related stressors can reduce the frequency and quality of interactions (LaForett & Mendez, 2010; Paulson et al., 2009).

Parent factors can influence emergent literacy interactions. For example, the highest level of education a mother in poverty has achieved can influence her beliefs about emergent literacy development and the style she uses in emergent literacy interactions (Curenton & Justice, 2008; B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009). Beliefs about emergent literacy held by parents who are Latino and have children with

speech or language difficulties can also influence these interactions (Kummerer et al., 2007). Emergent literacy interactions can also be influenced by parent education, and participation in their children's speech and language therapy (Kent-Walsh et al., 2010; Kummerer et al., 2007).

Children who are Latino and have speech or language impairments may not engage in much verbal interaction with their parents, and therefore may be perceived by them as unmotivated to do so (Kummerer & Lopez-Reyna, 2009). Some of these children do enjoy and demand storybook sharing, increasing the likelihood of its occurrence (Rodriguez, 2005). Child gender may influence the degree of interaction in storybook sharing of these parents, just as it influences those parents who are Latino and have children with typically developing language (Caspe, 2009).

While the existing research provides some insight into how parents who are Latino and have children with speech and language impairments engage in emergent literacy interactions with their children, and this research alludes to the possible influences of these interactions, more research is still needed to provide a clearer picture of these important interactions. The attributes of the various conversational, print based, and direct literacy teaching interactions in these families are also unclear. In addition, a clear picture has not yet developed regarding the influences of the emergent literacy interactions in Latino families who have children with speech or language impairments. None of the research into these interactions among Latino families who have children with speech or language impairments addresses the interactions and interaction influences specific to parents from Latino backgrounds living in North Carolina as a whole.



### **Conceptual Framework**

Figure 2 provides a graphic display of the conceptual framework that guided this study. It was anticipated that various sociocultural and language socialization factors, listed in the top box of Figure 2, would be found to influence the ways parents scaffold the various emergent literacy interactions they have with their children (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). These factors can expand and form each family's funds of knowledge, or repertoire of skills, experiences, and talents on which they draw (Gonzalez & Uhing, 2008). In addition, parents' own ideas and knowledge about language and literacy development, and the child's own interests and language abilities influence these interactions and how each parent scaffolds them.

It was also anticipated that these interactions (listed in the circles within the bottom circle) would differ among families based on sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors within families, each family's funds of knowledge, parents' enjoyment of the interactions, their theories of reading and language development, and their children's interests and language abilities (Binger et al., 2008; Heath, 1983; Kummerer et al., 2007; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011; Ochs et al., 2005; Perry et al., 2008; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Conclusion**

A close examination of the literature provided insight into the types of the emergent literacy interactions parents who are of Latino origin have with their young children with speech or language impairment, and some of the attributes of these interactions. It also resulted in a developing picture of the sociocultural and language socialization factors that may influence these interactions. This review also resulted in

the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided this research. The picture of these interactions and their influences is still developing, due to the small amount of research into these interactions within families of Mexican backgrounds who have children with speech or language impairments.

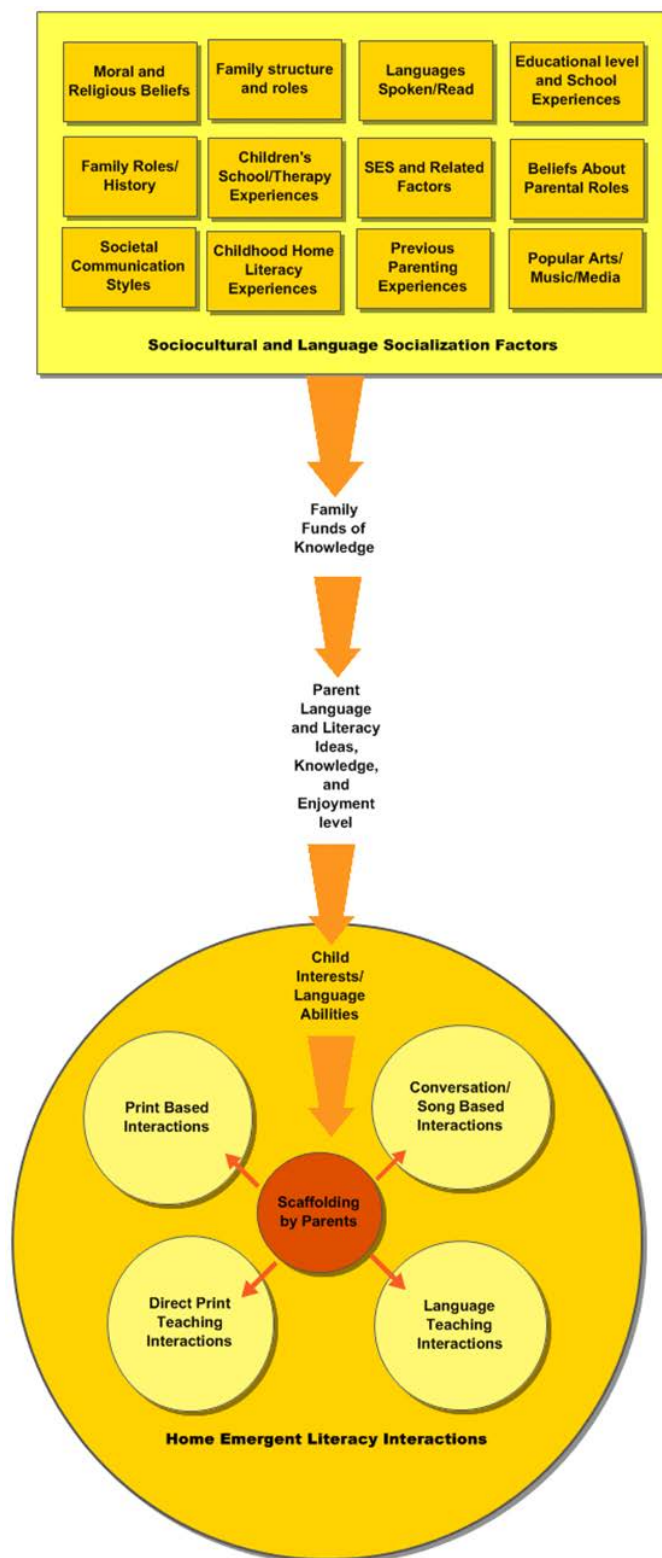


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework.

### **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate emergent literacy and language interactions between parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language difficulties in home settings. The questions that guided this research were:

- How are families of Latino heritage engaging in emergent literacy interactions with their children who have speech and language impairments?
- What sociocultural and language socialization factors influence the characteristics of these interactions?
  - A. Parent factors
  - B. Child factors

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter explains how this study was conducted. It will describe the research design that was used to conduct the study, and why it was chosen. Next, the unit of analysis will be described, as well as the research context. Information on the selection criteria, recruitment methods, and participants will be presented, followed by the data collection methods. Later, the process of data preparation and analysis will be described in detail, followed by an explanation of actions that were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the results.

## Research Design

A qualitative methodology was selected to engage in an in-depth investigation into *how* the participating parents engage in emergent literacy interactions with their children and the factors influencing these interactions. The emphasis on *how* implies an interest in the way these interactions are occurring, the process. At the same time, there was also an interest in exploring how these particular participating parents were engaging the process of interactions with their children in their home settings. Qualitative research is uniquely suited to the development of understanding of these interactions (Creswell, 2013). The study's goals fell under what Maxwell (2004a, 2004b; 2008) calls "process theory," which he defines as an approach that ". . . tends to see the world in terms of people, situations, events, and the processes that connect these; explanation is based on an analysis of how some situations and events influence others" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29). Maxwell (2013) explains that the strengths of qualitative research are a result of this process approach.

Case study was chosen as the specific qualitative methodology for this research, yet in the qualitative community, the definition of case study has been under dispute (Creswell, 2013). Stake (1995) explained that a case is the system or problem to be studied, and have others maintained that it is an inquiry strategy or methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009). Creswell (2013) addressed this debate by explaining that case study research is a type of qualitative research design, the system or product to be studied, *and* the final product of the study. The case study design used in this research aligns with Creswell's definition.

Case study research most closely matched this study's research questions as well. According to Yin (1994), a case study is an empirical inquiry that involves the study of a phenomenon in the context in which it occurs, when the context and the phenomenon are not easily teased apart. "How" and "what" questions such as the ones in this study can be answered with this method. Case study design was chosen as the best vehicle to aid in better understanding how emergent literacy interactions occur within each dyad, what influences are evident as the interactions occur, and how parents explain them (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). This methodology was also chosen because it is well suited to social science research that investigates parent-child dynamics (Yin, 1994).

In searching for the answers to the research questions, a realist stance was adopted, in spite of the fact that the research questions could be interpreted from a purely instrumentalist perspective (Maxwell, 2013). According to Maxwell (2013), realist questions are those that go beyond that which is observable, and consider the perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and intentions of participants as valid in their own right, worthy of analysis, and necessary in learning about the phenomenon being studied. Based upon the adoption of this perspective, both what was observed and what the parents reported was held as having equal value in this study. Case study has been used effectively by many researchers in the pursuit of understanding literacy and home literacy interactions between parents and their children at home (Barone, 2011; Kummerer et al., 2007; Reese & Gallimore, 2000; Rodriguez, 2005; Romero-Contreras, 2004).

As the goal of this case study was to describe the emergent literacy interactions of the participating dyads and what factors may be influencing them, this case study was

descriptive in nature. Rather than trying to prove a particular factor influences a particular interaction in a particular way, the goal of this research was to describe what parents explained as possible influences on language and literacy interactions, and which influences seemed evident during observed interactions. The goal was to present the possible influences that seem to be meaningful among and between the participating dyads, but not to reach a definitive and quantifiable conclusion by controlling for other possible influences in order to isolate a single influence. For example, if parents reported that they received storybooks from a book fair run by their older children's school, or that they sang the same songs to their children that they remember from their church, these experiences were noted as possibly influential of print and conversational interactions with these parents. The parents were then asked about the validity of these conclusions through member checking.

### **Unit of Analysis**

There were several different types of case study research from which to choose. Some case studies involve only one case, often unique in some way. In others, multiple cases are studied (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Again, the cases studied in this research were six parent-child dyads of Latino heritage living in the Piedmont region from North Carolina. Instrumental cases were chosen for this case study, and the same phenomena, emergent literacy interactions and influences, were studied in each case (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005). It was anticipated that there would be some substantial differences between the emergent literacy interactions and their influences in the various

dyads; therefore, a multiple case study appeared to be the best option for the investigation of these elements within each dyad in each home environment.

Each parent-child dyad, along with their interactions within each family's home, was considered as a separate case. These cases were thusly "bounded" (Creswell, 2013). This multiple case study approach facilitated a close and in-depth look at each family's emergent literacy interactions, not simply a picture of their frequency, and allowed for comparison within and between cases (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005). In addition, an understanding of the attributes or qualities of naturally occurring interactions was sought (Yin, 1994).

This multiple case study incorporated the collection and analysis of evidence in the form of multiple types of data that were triangulated, or overlapped (Creswell, 2013). This triangulation aided in making the multiple case study and its conclusions more valid or trustworthy (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). Triangulation will be discussed in detail in later sections, after the research context and sample are discussed below.

### **Research Context**

Qualitative research should take place in the natural setting where the targeted behaviors occur. Because sociocultural factors influence emergent literacy interactions that take place between parents and children in families, the home environments of families was the primary context of this case study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Zentella, 2005). In sociocultural theory, the cultural contexts in which practices take place are important because they influence and explain them (Vygotsky, 1978).



**Recruitment Region**

The families participating in this study lived in the Piedmont region of North Carolina in areas that are considered urban, suburban, or rural in Forsyth and Yadkin Counties. As of 2010, there were nearly 42,000 people of Latino background living in Forsyth County, making up 12% of the population there (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). About 28,000 of these individuals were of Mexican origin. It is estimated that in 2013, 20% of the children under 18 in Forsyth County, were of Latino origin. Most importantly, 22% of the enrolled students in Forsyth County Schools, and 23% of the children in North Carolina's Public Prekindergarten program were of Latino origin (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2014; WSFCS, 2014). Some recruitment was conducted with the help of one program in Yadkin County, North Carolina. As of 2011, there were 3,843 people of Hispanic origin living in Yadkin County making up 10% of the population there. Recruitment was conducted in these counties because of the growing number of Latino families with children living in them (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

**Recruitment Sites**

Recruiting took place in the following programs:

- Sarah Y. Austin Head Start Program
- Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program
- North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten Program
- Imprints for Children Program (home visiting)
- El Buen Pastor Program (family literacy)

- Two public schools that offered speech and language therapy to children whose parents bring them in for speech therapy only
- Two public schools that offer speech and language therapy on site.
- Two private speech therapy programs

Of the programs contacted, one dyad was found in the Head Start program (Catarina and Juan). Three dyads were found in NC-Pre-K programs (Beatrice and Diana, Dona and Carolina, and Elsa and Jose). The NC-Pre-K program that Carolina and Jose attended was also affiliated with the Head Start. One dyad participated in a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program, and currently participate in a Yadkin County public preschool program for exceptional children (Francisca and Diego). One dyad (Angela and Nina) formerly participated in the Imprints home visiting program.

Some of these programs offer parent education services and others do not. Some parents participate in this component of the programs, and some do not. Some parents featured in the emergent literacy interactions research participated in programs providing parent education. These experiences were noted as influential of parents' emergent literacy interactions. For this reason, the sites selected differed by whether they offer parent education as part of their programs (Perry et al., 2008; Quick et al., 2009; Rodriguez-Valls et al., 2014).

One recruitment goal was to have three dyads from programs that offer parent education and three from programs that do not have parent education. These sites are described below. The programs in which Catarina, Dona, and Elsa enrolled their children are either Head Start programs or affiliated with a Head Start program and have a parent

education component. The programs in which Beatrice and Francisca enrolled their children do not have a parent education component. While having participated with the home visiting program in the past with another child, Angela had not enrolled Nina in any early childhood program at the time of the study, though Nina was scheduled to begin attendance in a public school program for exceptional children after the conclusion of the study.

One Head Start program served as a recruitment site, and a Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Head Start program helped with recruitment also. Again, Head Start was also affiliated with one of the NC-Pre-K sites that were involved in recruitment. Head Start is a program designed for children from low-income families (NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, n.d.). In the year 2012-2013, approximately 23% of the children served in North Carolina Head Start classrooms were of Latino heritage (Office of Head Start, 2014). In Forsyth County, the 31 Head Start classrooms are spread across several sites and some are located in public schools. A local non-profit agency functions as the primary grantee and administers these classrooms. Approximately 29% of the 590 children served by this Head Start grantee were of Latino heritage in 2012-2013, and 26% of these children spoke Spanish as their primary language (Office of Head Start, 2014). The main office of the grantee is located in a large center on the eastern side of Winston-Salem. The classrooms in this center serve more parents of Latino heritage than do some of the others, and this center has a speech language pathologist on site. This center has been in existence for over forty years. Children in the Head Start classrooms in this center are three and four years old. Head Start offers parent education

among its many services. One private center that houses several NC-Pre-K programs that are run in partnership with the Head Start program mentioned above also served as a recruitment site. Another Head Start Center, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, located in Yadkin County also assisted in recruitment.

One private day care center that houses a NC-PreK classroom unaffiliated with Head Start also served as a recruitment site. North Carolina public prekindergarten programs serve four year olds, most of whom are economically disadvantaged. Approximately 24% of these children are of Latino heritage (Peisner-Feinbur et al., 2014). Last year, all of the children in this classroom were of Latino heritage. None of these NC-PreK programs offer extensive parent education among their services, but they do provide speech and language therapy on site.

A home visiting program (Imprints for Families) assisted in the recruitment efforts. Approximately 51% of the families served by Imprints between 2011 and 2012 were of Latino heritage (United Way of Forsyth County, 2014). It has an early childhood education component. Imprints for Families sends home visitors who use the Parents as Teachers curriculum that involves helping parents to engage in age appropriate activities and use positive discipline techniques with their children (Imprints, 2011; Parents As Teachers, 2008). The participating dyads were selected as described in more detail below.

### **Sample and Selection**

Six cases, comprised of parent-child dyads, were recruited for the study (Creswell, 2013). This number of participants was set as the goal in order to allow for

identification of trends across cases, but still be manageable for the purpose of in depth analysis of emergent literacy interactions and influences (Stake, 2005). For specific details regarding recruitment, see Table 1 below. Refer to Appendices G and H to view the recruitment flyer and script.

### **Participants and Selection Criteria**

Parents who met the following selection criteria were asked to participate. These selection criteria and the reasons for them are explained in greater detail below. All criteria content was based on parent report.

Parents were

- Mothers
- Had less than one year of college education (Three will have graduated from high school and three will not have done so.)
- Of immigrant, Latino heritage (born outside the U.S.)
- Parents or guardians of a 36-63 month-old child who had been diagnosed with a speech or language impairment as the primary disability
- Belonged to families of low SES status as indicated by the federal poverty level
- Spoke Spanish as their primary language
- Either received or not receive parent education as a part of their child's early childhood program or speech therapy

Children:

- Ranged in age from 36–63 months

- Were diagnosed with a speech or language impairment listed as the primary disability
- Were boys and girls
- Had no, younger, or older siblings

The parent that sent in the contact form or initiated contact with the primary investigator and signed the consent form was the focus parent in each dyad. The child receiving speech therapy that the parent named on the consent form became the focus child in each dyad.

**Sampling method and justification.** Purposive sampling was used to locate families (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2005). Stake (2005) explains that purposive sampling is often best suited to qualitative fieldwork, especially multiple case studies, because it helps in the recruitment of a sample of participants best suited to what one wants to study. Table 1 describes the sampling criteria, justification, the number of parents hoped for under each criterion, and the actual number of participants that were selected based on that criteria.

Table 1

## Sampling Criteria and Justification

General Criteria	Specific Criteria	Number of Dyads		Reasons for Selection
		Goal	Actual	
Low SES	If family of four, total gross income below federal poverty guidelines	6	6	Low SES influences emergent literacy interactions (Foster et al., 2005; Raviv et al., 2004; E. T. Rodríguez, Hines, et al., 2009; Santos & Alfred, 2011).
Latino Immigrant	Mexican, or Central American	6	6	Parents from Mexico and Central America can hold different cultural models in regards to early literacy development (Billings, 2009; Gallimore, 2000; Kummerer et al., 2007). Their literacy interactions can differ from parents who are not Latino (Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Perry et al., 2008). The language and literacy socialization practices of parents of Latino heritage may differ from that of parents who do not share that heritage (Reese & Gallimore, 2000).
Parents' Education Level	Graduated High School	3	2	Emergent literacy interactions can be different when the parent is a high school graduate than when they are not (B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009; Weigel et al., 2006). Parents' beliefs about reading can be more influential than their level of education (Curenton & Justice, 2008).
	Did not graduate	3	4	
Child's Age	36-63 months	6	6	Families of Latino background may wait until their children are three to five before reading to them, or assuming that their children are capable of understanding, and may wait until their child is three or school age to read to them (Reese & Gallimore, 2000).

Table 1

(Cont.)

General Criteria	Specific Criteria	Number of Dyads		Reason for Selection
		Goal	Actual	
Child's Speech and Language Diagnoses and Services	Have a primary diagnosis of speech or language impairment, and ideally be receiving speech/language therapy	6	6	Speech/language therapy can influence interactions around language and literacy, especially when therapists share their suggestions with or teach the parents
Child's Educational Setting	Parent education component	3	3	Family literacy programs as in Perry et al. (2008) and Quick et al. (2009) can be influential. Head Start literacy practices can be incongruent with the literacy practices of migrant families (Purcell-Gates, 2013).
	No parent education component	3	3	
Child's Family Makeup	Older Siblings	3	4	The expectations of an older sibling's kindergarten can cause parents to initiate storybook sharing with younger kids (Reese & Gallimore, 2000).
	No or younger siblings	3	2	
Child's Gender	Girls	3	3	Parents who are Latino may read differently to their boys than to their girls (Caspe, 2009).
	Boys	3	3	



Selected dyads were similar in some ways and different in others. Similarities and differences among the dyads were incorporated to most closely reflect the variety of child and parent characteristics present in the larger population of parents of Latino heritage who have preschool aged children with speech or language impairment, but the selection criteria were not developed in attempt to generalize results to this population (Maxwell, 2013). All of the inclusion criteria selected: reflected influential factors that were evident in the literature review results; aligned with the sociocultural/language socialization theoretical and conceptual frameworks; and enabled the corresponding research questions to be addressed as thoroughly as possible.

The parent members of each dyad were similar in that were all of Latino heritage, of low socioeconomic status, and reported speaking Spanish as their dominant language. All mothers in each dyad were immigrants from Mexico or Central America. All children were between 36-63 months of age, had a primary diagnosis of speech or language disability, and all but one were receiving speech/ language therapy. The parent whose child was not receiving therapy was allowed to remain in the study because she and her child met all other criteria. In addition, it seemed that this dyad's participation in the study would enable the research questions to be answered, in spite of the transportation and organization difficulties that prevented the parent from bringing her child to therapy appointments.

Participating mothers differed in some significant ways. During recruitment, the goal was to find three mothers that had graduated from high school, and three that had not done so. This selection goal was developed because emergent literacy interactions

can be different when the parent is a high school graduate versus when they are not (B. L. Rodriguez, Tamis-LeManda, et al., 2009; Weigel et al., 2006). The fact that the parents' beliefs about reading can be more influential than their level of education was considered during data analysis (Curenton & Justice, 2008). Among the parents who were actually recruited, two (Catarina and Dona) were high school graduates, and one (Elsa) had reached the eleventh grade. One parent (Beatrice) had reached finished the ninth grade. The other two parents (Angela, and Francisca) did not attend high school, finishing the third and sixth grades, respectively.

Participating children also differed in significant ways. Family literacy programs such as those described in Perry et al. (2008) Rodriguez-Valls et al. (2014), and Quick et al. (2009) can influence emergent literacy interactions between parents and children. Because of that finding, one recruitment goal was to locate three children who participated in programs with a parent education/family literacy component, and three whose programs did not offer these services, or who did not attend an early childhood program. Again, of the children actually recruited, two children (Diana and Diego) were enrolled in programs that did not have a parent education component, and one child (Nina) was not enrolled in an early childhood program. Three children (Juan, Carolina, and Jose) were enrolled in programs that included a parent education component.

In addition, participating children differed in their ages in relationship to siblings. The goal was to recruit three children who only had older siblings, as well as three who had younger or no siblings. This selection goal was created because expectations of an older sibling's school can sometimes influence parents to initiate storybook sharing with

their younger children (Reese & Gallimore, 2000, 2008). Of the children actually recruited, three had older siblings only (Nina, Carolina, and Diego), one (Diana) was an only child with a younger cousin who moved into the home during the study, one child (Jose) was the oldest and another (Juan) had an older and a younger sibling. Thus three children were the youngest among the children in their family (Nina, Diana, and Diego), and three were either older, only, or middle children (Juan, Carolina, and Jose).

While selection of study participants was made in an intentional way, this process was not able to account for all of the ways the dyads would be similar or different from one another, and recruitment of equal numbers of participants from the various groups was not possible in the time frame available. Under the advice of a cultural informant and another professional in the field, recruitment criteria were expanded to account for two other characteristics of the Latino community in the area. Two bilingual parents were located (Dona and Elsa), and some children (Diana, Carolina, and Jose) who were being seen by private speech therapists and did not have I.E.P.s were admitted into the study. As a result, two of the participating children (Carolina and Jose) were bilingual.

There was significant and uncontrolled variation between the six included dyads. All of the parents worked outside the home to some extent except two (Elsa and Francisca) who were unemployed. Two children (Juan and Diego) had participated in early intervention previous to the study, and the others had not done so. One parent (Beatrice) had an indigenous origin, while the others did not. Three parents (Catarina, Dona, and Elsa) had lived in the United States for 14 years or longer and the other three

lived in the U.S. less than 14 years. Their reasons for immigrating were either economic (Beatrice, Catarina), educational (Angela, Dona) or because relatives were already living in the U.S. (Elsa, Francisca). As there is literature that indicates that all of these factors may be influential, they were all considered as possible influences of interactions, but it was beyond the scope of this study to control for all of the various factors that influence interactions.

The search for mother-child dyads began once the above mentioned programs agreed to be involved in the study, and after research approval was formally given by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Institutional Review Board. Recruitment was conducted as follows.

**Recruiting method.** Individual speech therapists, program or center directors, and public school principals were asked to help in the recruitment of possible participants at the various programs mentioned. These gatekeepers were informed about the selection criteria and asked to arrange informal individual, small, or large group presentations about the study for potentially interested parents who fit the criteria (See Appendix G- Parent Meeting Script), and to facilitate the distribution of flyers to parents in children's book bags by their teachers (See Appendix H- Parent Flyer). The same flyers were be used for both individual parent meetings and for distribution in book bags. Flyers, as well as the parent presentation, explained in detail what would be asked of parents, and that parents who participated will receive either one \$75 store gift card midway through the study, and another card of equal value at the end of the study, or one \$75 gift card midway in the study, and a bag of language and literacy oriented toys worth \$75. Parents

were asked to return the flyers in sealed envelopes so they could then be contacted by phone or email by the researcher to set up an initial meeting, using contact information provided on the flyers returned by the directors, principals, and therapists. For the most part, parents read the flyers when they were given to them, and asked the directors, principals, and therapists to have the primary researcher call them. Information about the dyads appears below. To maintain their privacy, pseudonyms have been given every parent and child who participated in the study.

### Participant Dyads

Six parent child dyads participated in the study. Each of the parents was female. A brief description of each dyad is given in Table 2, with tables that summarize these descriptions and provide some extra details to follow. All of the information that follows relates to important demographic characteristics of the participant dyads.

Table 2

#### Parent Demographic Information

Parent	Country	Age	Age at Arrival	Years in US	Reasons For Immigration	Highest Education Level	Adults Home	Children Home
Angela	Vargas, Guerro, Mexico	24	14	10	Education	6	3	3
Beatrice	Guernabura, Morelos, Mexico	30	17	14	Economic (No work, food-sister here)	9	2	3
Catarina	Altamirano, Guerrero, Mexico	28	20	8	Economic (Better Future)	12	2	3

Table 2

(Cont.)

Parent	Country	Age	Age at Arrival	Years in US	Reasons For Immigration	Highest Education Level	Adults Home	Children Home
Dona	Tegucigalpa, Honduras	21	7	14	Education (Brought by mom)	12	3-5	1 (2 in home)
Elsa	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic	24	4	20	Various (Sent for by grandfather)	11	2	2
Francisca	Istapia, Guerro, Mexico	29	22	7	Economic (Brought by husband already here)	3	1	2

### Angela and Nina

Angela is 24 years old and came to the U.S. at the age of 14 from Vargas in Guerro, Mexico. She has never lived in any U.S. state besides North Carolina. Angela came to the U.S. to get an education and she has completed the sixth grade. Angela lives in a three-bedroom duplex apartment in a suburban neighborhood in public housing on a dead end street. There are several other families of Latino heritage in her apartment neighborhood. She lives with her three children, ages three, five, and six, her mother, and her brother. Angela speaks Spanish as her dominate language. She works cleaning offices several days a week but her annual income places her below the poverty level.

Nina is Angela's three-year-old daughter. Nina does not attend an early childhood program but is cared for often by Angela's mother when Angela is at work. She is the youngest of three children and speaks Spanish as her primary language. The results of

Nina's DIAL-4 screening, given in Spanish, indicated potential delays in the area of language. During this screening, Nina's score was low but she demonstrated the ability to use home signs to label pictures. Nina was diagnosed with severe expressive/receptive deficits with possible articulation deficits in the fall of 2014. Nina's speech is very difficult for unfamiliar listeners to understand. Beginning and ending consonants are often missing. Sometimes Nina does not seem to understand what others are saying to her but Angela explained that sometimes Nina is willful. While she does not yet receive speech/language therapy, a dosage of 30 minutes three times a week was recommended. Nina is scheduled to begin receiving speech/language therapy when she attends a preschool class for exceptional children beginning in the spring.

### **Beatrice and Diana**

Beatrice is 30 years old and came to the U.S. at the age of 17 from Guernabura in Morelos, Mexico. She has never lived in any U.S. state besides North Carolina. Beatrice came to the U.S. for economic reasons and because a relative was already living in the state. Beatrice has completed the ninth grade. Beatrice lives in a three-bedroom ranch home in a suburban neighborhood with her three children, ages five, eleven, and fifteen, and her husband. There are few other families of Latino heritage in her neighborhood. She speaks Spanish as her dominate language but is learning English. She works full-time at a fast food restaurant five days a week but her family's annual income places her below the poverty level.

Diana is Angela's five-year-old daughter. She attends the public NC-Pre K early childhood program which is housed in a private childcare center. English is the

predominant language spoken there. She is the youngest of three children and speaks predominately Spanish at home, but sometimes speaks English with her siblings. The results of Diana's DIAL-4 screening, given in Spanish, indicated possible delays in the area of language. During this screening, Diana had difficulty with some Spanish consonants and could not give her full name or her birth date, or answer the problem-solving questions. She was, however, able to identify many pictures both receptively and expressively. She was diagnosed with a severe expressive language delay in the fall of 2014. Diana's speech is easy for unfamiliar listeners to understand but some letter sounds are incorrectly articulated. She receives speech/language therapy 30 minutes two-times a week. Therapy is administered in English only, and at this point, her articulation errors are not being addressed.

### **Catarina and Juan**

Catarina is 28 years old and came to the U.S. at the age of 20 from Altamirano, in Guerrero, Mexico. She lived briefly in California before coming to North Carolina. Catarina came to the U.S. for economic reasons. She has completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Catarina lives in a first floor, three-bedroom apartment in a city residential neighborhood with many apartment buildings near an area with many stores. There are many other families of Latino heritage also living in her apartment complex. She lives with her three children ages two, three, and eleven, and her husband. Catarina speaks Spanish as her dominate language. She works several days a week in a hotel restaurant and her husband is usually at work, but her family's annual income places her below the poverty level.



Juan is Catrina's three-year-old son. Juan attends a Head Start early childhood program where the predominant language spoken is English. He is the middle child of three, and speaks Spanish as his primary language. The results of Juan's DIAL-4 screening, given in the Spanish, indicated potential delays in the area of language. During this screening, Juan had difficulty identifying most pictures verbally but could identify them receptively. He was unwilling to say his name or answer questions. He was diagnosed with speech language impairment in the fall of 2014. Juan's speech is very difficult for unfamiliar listeners to understand. He often does not articulate final consonants and sometimes mixes jargon with actual words when he says sentences. In his assessment, Catarina explained she often understands him but sometimes did not seem to do so. Juan receives speech/language therapy 30 minutes two-times a week. Therapy is delivered primarily in English with occasional Spanish words.

### **Dona and Carolina**

Dona is 21 years old and came to the U.S. at the age of seven from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. She lived for several years in Texas before coming to North Carolina a couple of years ago. Dona's mother brought her to the U.S. so she could receive an education. She has completed the 12th grade. Dona lives in a doublewide mobile home in a large trailer-park neighborhood with her daughter, her sister and her child, and two to three other adults. Most of Dona's neighbors are of Latino heritage and the neighborhood has many families with school-age children. Dona speaks Spanish as her dominate language but is also fluent in English. She works part-time cleaning houses but her annual income places her below the poverty level.

Carolina is Dona's five-year-old daughter. She attends an NC-Pre-K early childhood program housed in a private childcare center where the predominant language spoken is English. Carolina is the older of two children living in the home and speaks English and Spanish. Carolina's English skills are somewhat stronger than her Spanish skills, but she can understand and converse in both languages. According to Dona, unfamiliar listeners sometimes have difficulty understanding Carolina when she speaks either Spanish or English. The results of Carolina's DIAL-4 screening, given in English, indicated potential delays in the area of language. During this screening Dona performed much better when given the English version than the one in Spanish. She easily identified pictures and gave solutions to problems but knew few letter sounds and some letter names, and could not give rhyming words. In the fall, Carolina received a diagnosis of Expressive/Receptive Language Delay with Articulation Deficits. Carolina receives speech/language therapy 30 minutes two times a week. Therapy is delivered in English.

**Elsa and Jose**

Elsa is 24 years old and came to the U.S. at the age of four from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. She has lived for most of her life in The Bronx, New York and has recently moved to North Carolina. Elsa was brought to the U.S. to access a better education, having been sent for by her grandfather. Elsa has completed the 11th grade. She lives in a second floor two-bedroom apartment on a dead end street where there are many other apartment buildings owned by the same company. The neighborhood is a residential one with few stores, though it is located within the city limits. There are few

other families of Latino origin on her street. Elsa lives with her two children, ages two and four, and her husband who for most of the study was away on out of state construction jobs. Elsa speaks Spanish as her dominate language but is also fluent in English. She is unemployed and her family's annual income places her below the poverty level. The family's income is declining due her husband's recent layoff.

Jose is Elsa's four-year-old son. Jose attended an NC-Pre-K early childhood program that is affiliated with the local Head Start. The predominant language spoken there is English. He is the older of two children and speaks predominantly English, though he understands most Spanish and can speak some words. The results of Juan's DIAL-4 screening, given in Spanish then English, indicated that he likely had little difficulties in the area of language. During this screening, Jose was able to use English to complete most tasks and explain possible solutions to problems. He had some difficulty articulating some letter sounds. He knew the letters of the alphabet and some of their sounds but could not rhyme or identify objects with the same beginning letter sounds. Jose received a diagnosis of phonological disorder in the fall of 2014. Jose's speech is relatively easy for unfamiliar listeners to understand but he makes subtle articulation errors. Jose receives speech/language therapy 30 minutes two times a week. Therapy is delivered in English by a bilingual speech therapist.

### **Francisca and Diego**

Francisca is 29 years old and came to the U.S. at the age of 22 from Istapia in Guerrerro, Mexico. While in the U.S., she has only lived in North Carolina. Francisca came to the U.S. for economic reasons and because her husband who was already living

in the state doing farm work brought her. She has completed the third grade. Francisca lives in a singlewide trailer in an outlying county on a dead end rural gravel road where there are several other trailers. Many other Latino families live within driving distance. She shares the home with her two children, ages three and five. Her husband is incarcerated and faces deportation. Francisca speaks Spanish as her dominate language but understands some English words. She is unemployed and her family's annual income places her below the poverty level.

Diego is Francisca's three-year-old son. He attends an early childhood public school program in a nearby elementary school with other children who have special needs. The predominant language spoken is there is English. Diego is the younger of two children and speaks Spanish as his primary language but also uses English words. The results of Diego's DIAL-4 screening, given in Spanish, indicated potential difficulties in the area of language. During this screening Diego could identify some pictures of objects verbally and identify some receptively. He could give his name and age. Diego was diagnosed with an expressive language delay with articulation deficits in the fall of 2014. His speech is sometimes difficult for unfamiliar listeners to understand. He uses primarily one and two word utterances. Diego receives speech/language therapy 30 minutes two times a week. Therapy is delivered in English with occasional Spanish words.

Table 3

## Child Demographic Information

Child	Age	Birth Order	Setting	Home Language	School Language	DIAL-4 Screening Scores		Screening Language	Therapy Language	Therapy Dosage
Nina	3 yrs. 36 mos.	Youngest	None	Spanish	N/A	Total Score Status at 16%, 1.0 SD Cutoff	1 Potential Delay	Spanish	N/A	Three Times per Week for 30 Minutes
Diana	5 yrs 63 mos.	Youngest	NC-Pre-K	Spanish	English	Total Score Status at 16%, 1.0 SD Cutoff	12 Potential Delay	Spanish	English	Twice a Week for 30 Minutes
Juan	3 yrs 45 mos.	Middle	Head Start	Spanish	English	Total Score Status at 16%, 1.0 SD Cutoff	4 Potential Delay	Spanish to English	English	Twice a Week for 30 Minutes
Carolina	5 yrs. 63 mos.	Oldest/ Only	NC-Pre-K/ Head Start	Spanish/ English	English	Percentile Status at 16%, 1.0 SD Cutoff	19 Potential Delay	Spanish to English	English (Spanish Available)	Twice a Week for 30 Minutes
Jose	4 yrs. 58 mos.	Oldest	NC-Pre-K/ Head Start	English/ Spanish	English	Total Score Status at 16%, 1.0 SD Cutoff	22 OK	Spanish	English (Spanish Available)	Twice a Week for 30 Minutes
Diego	3 yrs. 38 mos.	Youngest	Exceptional Children Public Preschool	Spanish	English	Total Score Status at 16%, 1.0 SD Cutoff	1 Potential Delay	Spanish	English	Twice a Week for 30 Minutes

Table 4

## Child-Speech/Language Assessment Results and Dosage

Child	Speech/ Language Assessment		Scores	Diagnosis
Nina	REEL-3, Parent Report, Clinical Observations	Receptive	AE=15 mos.	Severe Expressive/ Receptive Deficits with Possible Articulation Deficits
		Expressive	AE= 12 mos.	
		Overall	Under 55 and 1% in both Receptive and Expressive Language	
	Informal Articulation Assessment	Notes	Oral groping behaviors were noted. Mom reports that when Nina imitates a word, often only a vowel is produced. (vaca=ka)	
Diana	PLS-4-Preschool Language Scale	Auditory Comprehension	Standard Score: 67 Age Equivalent:3-6	Severe Expressive Language Delay
		Expressive	Standard Score:50 Age Equivalent:2-4	
		Total Language	Standard Score: 54 Age Equivalent:2-10	
	Informal Articulation Assessment	Notes	Some difficulties are possible, but formal assessment will be delayed until there is an increase in expressive/receptive language function.	
Juan	REEL-3	Receptive Language	Ability Score: 81	Speech Language Impairment
		Expressive Language	Ability Score: 82	
	Spanish Articulation (Informal)	Notes	Non-compliant Juan lacks all final and some initial consonants. Sometimes his mother understood him and could interpret, but sometimes she could not do so. Single words were noted.	

Table 4

(Cont.)

Child	Speech/ Language Assessment		Scores	Diagnosis
Carolina	PLS-5-Preschool Language Scale	Auditory Comprehension	Standard Score: 83 Age Equivalent:4-4	Expressive Language Delay with Articulation Deficits
		Expressive Language	Standard Score:76 Age Equivalent:3-10	
		Total Language	Standard Score: 78 Age Equivalent:4-1	
	CAAP Articulation and Phonology Assessment	Issues	Fronting, final consonant deletion, stopping, and gliding	
Jose	PLS-5-Preschool Language Scale	Auditory Comprehension	Standard Score: 97 Age Equivalent:4-7	Phonological Disorder
		Expressive	Standard Score: 95 Age Equivalent:4-6	
		Total Language	Standard Score: 95 Age Equivalent:4-6	
	CAAP Articulation and Phonology Assessment	Issues	Fronting, final consonant deletion, stopping, and gliding	
Diego	Interdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment	Language Comprehension	Age Equivalent: 0-20 Months	Severe Expressive Language Delay
		Language Production	Age Equivalent: 0-20 Months	
		Articulation	Age Equivalent: 0-21 Months	
		Pragmatics	Age Equivalent: 0-20 Months	
		Emergent Literacy	Age Equivalent: 0-18 Months	
		Communication Skills and Adaptive Behavior	Composite score:71 Age Range: 15-36 Months Mode: 20 Months	

### **Data Collection**

The types of data collected were guided, as Yin (1994) suggests, by the study's theoretical framework. The sociocultural and language socialization aspects of the theoretical framework provided a foundation for choosing data sources that facilitate a better understanding of the interactions between the parents and children of the focus families, as they used signs in the form of written and spoken language (Vygotsky, 1978). Aspects of language and literacy socialization within these families were examined to gain an understanding of how parents who are Latino use print and language with their children in ways aligned with their culture (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). The data collection methods were also guided by their feasibility and usefulness (Maxwell, 2013). To determine how parents engage in emergent literacy interactions, and what parent and child characteristics influence these interactions, multiple forms of data were collected. A description of each instrument follows.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Methods**

Creswell (2013) explained that semi-structured interviews, artifacts, observations, photos, video, and audio recordings are all rich sources of data for case studies. Seven instruments were employed in this study to aid in collection of this data. These instruments included (a) an eligibility meeting—including the eligibility and protocol forms, (b) the DIAL 4 language subscale, (c) an observation protocol, (d) a protocol for two semi-structured interviews, (e) one parent questionnaire, (f) an artifact collection form, and (g) records review notes. Recording data using these instruments facilitated data collection for a thick, rich description of the emergent literacy interactions within the



dyads, and illuminated the parent and child sociocultural and language socialization factors that influenced these interactions (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 1994). See Table 2. All forms were digitized and filled out in the iPad application Notability. Specifics relating to each data collection instrument/device are explained below.

**Eligibility Meeting Form.** A consent/eligibility meeting was held with each prospective participating parent for the purpose of reintroductions, signing the consent form (Appendix I), collecting information to determine if a parent meets the selection criteria, further establishing rapport, and scheduling of initial observations. The eligibility meeting protocol (Appendix A) guided the meetings. This protocol listed the events in the meeting agenda, and how the eligibility process was explained to each parent. It also included a table for recording recruitment targets and results. It also included a table for recording recruitment targets and results. An eligibility information collection form (Appendix B) included questions helpful for ascertaining whether parents met the initial criteria for inclusion in the study. This form included questions about parents' age, education level, country and state of origin, whether and from whom their child receives speech therapy, and general income information. In addition to establishing whether a parent met the study criteria, the information parents provided on their income, town and state of origin, and on other places in the U.S. where they had lived, could have indicated possible influences of the emergent literacy interactions they engage in with their children.

**DIAL- 4 Language Subscale.** In an effort to understand each child's most current level of receptive, expressive, and phonemic awareness, the language subscale of

the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL-4) was be used (Mardell & Goldenburg, 2011). This assessment is a screening tool that measures the abilities of children ages 2-6 to 5-11 in all developmental domains. This screening is reliable, with an internal consistency of .83-.95, and a test-retest reliability of .80. Its construct validity across all measures is sufficient, and it was normed using Spanish and English speakers (Minnesota Department of Health, 2014). The language subscale measures expressive and receptive language development as well as phonemic awareness. Items include answering personal questions, naming objects, identifying objects via pointing, and phonemic awareness tasks such as rhyming and playing “I Spy.”

**Home observations.** Observation has become a central tool in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Spradley, 1980). Direct observation, including video recording, is one of the richest sources of data relating to parenting practices (Hoff et al., 2002). Naturalistic observation was used in this study because the method is well suited for learning about children in the natural environment (Mukherji & Albon, 2010). Of course, any observer can still influence the observation results, even if the goal is to be unobtrusive (McKechnie, 2008; Yin, 2009). Parents do tend to interact more with their children when they are being observed (Hoff et al., 2002). Thus, observation was one of many forms of data collected in this multiple case study, and member checking of samples of the synthesis of the data and interpretations was also employed (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

Based on the results of the pilot study, two hours of observation per visit over at least three visits were conducted This method yielded rich descriptions to aid in the

formation of a deep understanding of the particular phenomenon, and captured unanticipated behaviors, while still maintaining a general focus (McKechnie, 2008). To that end, naturalistic observation field notes were taken in an effort to address the research questions.

An observation protocol was used (Appendix E-F) to guide observation visits. A grand tour observation protocol (Appendix E) was used during a requested tour of the home. On the grand tour observation form, there was a space for drawing the floor plan of the home, and for taking notes. All other observations followed the protocol on the standard observation form (Appendix F). This form contained a place to list non-interactive activities as they occurred, and a separate place to write detailed descriptions of interactions as they occurred. In addition, there was a space to record the start and end times of the various interactions. In addition to interaction descriptions, as much dialogue as possible within each dyad was recorded in writing.

**Audio-video recordings.** Audio- video recordings supplanted the typed field notes made during observations. An iPad or mobile phone was used as recording devices. These recordings were used to support the observational data, and were employed often when parents read stories, engaged in language teaching, or engaged in conversational interactions that seemed to be difficult to capture in writing. Video has been used frequently in social and education research to aid in the further study of various social interactions (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). Researchers who do naturalistic observations frequently use video recording (McKechnie, 2008). Rooted in the observation method, video has proven helpful in research into face-to-face interactions in

contexts of informal learning, including that within families (Barron, 2007). The use of visual methods, tools, and data can help the education researcher more deeply reflect on observations (Goldman, 2007).

While taking videos is easy, using video data in research is not (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). It is possible when using video data to cause problems. It is possible to gather much more data than can possibly be analyzed in a reasonable period. It may enable the researchers to make unfounded assertions about the opinions and motives of participants; to gather data without a clear purpose or that does not align with the research questions; and to find that once data has been collected, there is no strategy for its analysis (Haw & Hadfield, 2011; Lincoln, personal communication, 2014; Wagner, 2006).

It was important to have a plan for the collection and analysis of that data (Yvonne Lincoln, personal communication, 2014), and for the primary investigator to determine her purpose in using video data (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). The primary purpose for use of video data in this study was that of extraction. This means that video was used as a way of recording interactions for later study in more depth than would have been possible only using field notes (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). Because it is important that the video collection, and even the positioning of the camera, be guided by theory, the selection of interactions to video record, were guided by the research questions, as recommended by Derry et al. (2010). The goal in capturing the interactions on video was to better understand the characteristics of emergent literacy and language interactions such as storybook sharing, and direct language or print teaching between the participating

parents and their children, and some conversational interactions. Further details about video data collection procedures are discussed below.

***Audio recordings.*** Audio recordings can be valuable sources of case study evidence (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009) and are useful for supporting direct observation of parenting practices (Hoff et al., 2002). It is the most common data gathering method in qualitative research (Firmin, 2008). An iPad or mobile phone was used to record data also. Just as with audio video data, the audio recordings supported the collection of other data such as that which is collected during observation visits and semi structured interviews. As described below, audio data did not total more than 20 minutes per observation visit.

**Parent questionnaire.** A parent questionnaire (Appendix C) adapted from the Family Bilingual Information & Observation Questionnaire (BIO) (Hardin, Scott-Little, & Mereoiu, 2013a, 2013b) was used as a way of collecting information from the parents. The original BIO questionnaire includes three sections. The first section contains 13 questions are related to demographic and language dominance and preference of family members. In addition, there are two questions about what community locations the child visits and what languages are spoken there, and questions asking how important it is to the parent that his or her child speaks English, Spanish or both. The second section asks parents 21 questions about their child's speech/language developmental milestones, and the third section includes twenty questions about their child's current speech and language abilities.

The adapted questionnaire was designed to provide an overview of the child's language environment and current abilities in both Spanish and English, as reported by the parent. The questionnaire consisted of forty questions. Twenty of these questions came from section three of the BIO and asked parents about their children's current expressive and receptive language skills in English and Spanish. In addition, 13 questions came from section one of the BIO. These questions asked for parents' opinions regarding the relative importance of their child speaking English and/or Spanish, whether and where their child had ever been enrolled in out of home care previous to preschool, and what language was spoken there; and what languages are used during the use of media and storybook sharing at home. The remaining questions asked how long each parent in the home had lived in the US, what motivated their immigration, and whether and where they had lived in the U.S. previously.

**Interviews.** Case study research usually includes interview data (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). The primary goal of the interviews was to ascertain the influences of parent-child emergent literacy interactions in the home. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial because they are more conversation-like than structured interviews (Roulston, 2008). Semi-structured interviews allow for in depth exploration of a research topic, and are sometimes referred to as *in –depth interviews*. The researcher maintains a certain amount of control over the conversational topics covered and the line of inquiry pursued, but the participants have the freedom to elaborate as they answer the questions, sometimes taking the conversation in related new directions. The researcher can then probe these elaborations and new topics further with follow-up and probe questions, thus

gathering in-depth information, without manipulating or determining the results in advance (Cook, 2008). Two formal semi structured interviews were held. See Appendix for sample interview forms. Interviews enabled a better understanding of parents' thoughts, feelings, opinions, and past experiences related to language and literacy.

A set of interview questions, written based on the research questions and the literature review, were piloted in spring of 2014. These questions were developed based on the literature review results related to interactions and interaction influences within dyads that were evident in the literature. Changes to two unclear questions were made, and two new questions were added. The new questions related to what parents see their children doing with books and writing materials, and whether their attitudes towards doing reading and language activities with their children have changed over time. Both interviews were semi-structured. This means that the primary researcher was free to ask further questions related to parents' responses, and parents' answers that may not relate directly to the questions were still recorded. The interviews were conducted using the protocol in Appendix D. This protocol included interview questions as well as instructions. The protocol was followed the same way during each interview.

The first semi-structured interview had eight questions. Most questions in this interview had sub questions, or probes, that related to the main questions. Questions in the first interview related to what language and literacy interactions parents remember from childhood, their child's abilities and interests, and their feelings and ideas about various emergent literacy interactions (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). (See the interview guide in Appendix D) The questions also probed parents' theories about how

children learn to read, how they know what they know, and their preferred literacy interactions are with their children, and how they feel during these interactions. These questions were meant to target possible influences for their emergent literacy interactions with their children. Three main questions and two sub questions in the first interview related to the various emergent literacy interactions. Five main questions and 16 sub questions or probes related to the possible influences of these interactions.

The final semi-structured interview had only five questions. These questions were more open ended, related to what was observed during the in home observations, and provided an opportunity for the parents to share information that they feel related to their emergent literacy interactions, but about which they had not yet been asked. One question related to the kinds of interactions parents do with their children. One question primarily related to influences of these interactions, one question related to both, and another was to be formed during the interview and aimed to clarify an interactions or possible influence that arose during previous observations, as well as probe whether some interactions occur that were not observed. The last question asked parents if there is any more information that they would like to share.

**Artifact description form.** In an effort to glimpse some emergent literacy interactions in the home environment not detected during the observations, to ascertain what parents already knew about literacy and language development, and to understand what may influence these interactions, parents were asked to take some of their own data. The artifact description form was be used to record the artifact data (Appendix J). These data were to have consisted of photographs of parents and their children engaging in



interactions they thought were important to their child's language and literacy development, or a collection of items such as refrigerator art, workbook sheets, crafts, or any other evidence of language/literacy-oriented activities. The form consisted of a table with a row for each artifact. There was a place for the picture, the parent's description of the interaction represented by the artifact, and a place to record the parent's explanation for why they chose the artifact.

**Records review.** In order to get background information on the children about their current language skills, one of the possible influences of emergent literacy interactions, parents were asked permission for the examination of their child's speech and language therapy notes and a copy of their individual education plan, if their child had one. These records and documents were examined to determine what speech or language assessments were given each child, results of the most current measurement of the child's speech or language development, and the amount of speech or language therapy which the child was presently receiving.

Table 5

## Crosswalk of Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

Research Questions	Data Sources							
	Home Observations	Audio Recording	Audio/ Visual Recording	Interviews	Parent Questionnaire and Eligibility Form	Parent Collected Artifacts	Therapy Document Review	DIAL-4
How are families of Latino heritage engaging in emergent literacy interactions with their children who have speech and language impairments?	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
What sociocultural and language socialization factors influence the characteristics of these interactions?	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data measures discussed above were used intentionally at different time points in each of the five weeks of each parent's participation in the study. In week one, an eligibility meeting was held with each parent individually (See the protocol in Appendix A). Parents were given the option of whether they would like to meet at their homes, the child's program, or a nearby library. Each meeting lasted approximately one hour. In this meeting, the study was thoroughly explained using the consent form (Appendix I), which parents were then asked to sign. Next, parents were guided to complete the eligibility questionnaire (Appendix B). As the parents answered the questions, the table on the eligibility form was filled out, as a way to record which parents met which criteria. At the end of the meeting, parents were informed about whether they could participate in the study. All parents who attended this meeting received a storybook as a thank you gift. The meetings closed with a few minutes of informal discussion to further build rapport with accepted parents. A calendar was given to parents to be used to schedule the first observation visits with them.

Later in week one or in the following week, with parental permission, each child's speech/language therapist was contacted. A visit was made to their offices. The child's speech therapy records were examined, and the latest expressive and receptive language assessment scores were viewed and recorded on the iPad. The language in which the assessments were given was confirmed. In addition, if the child had an Individualized Education Plan, it was examined. If not, any therapy plan created by the therapist was

examined. In this way each child's primary diagnosis was confirmed. This information was recorded in field notes.

Also in week one, or sometimes the following week, if the parent met the criteria for acceptance in the study, the first in home naturalistic observation was conducted. This observation began with the request of a brief tour of the home (Goin, Nordquist, & Twardosz, 2004; Spradley, 1980). Parents were asked to show the primary research the home, and she made a rough diagram of it. Parents were informed that they did not have to provide a tour of their home if they did not wish to do so (see Appendix E). For the rest of the first observation visit, naturalistic observation notes were taken as described below, and an effort was made to be as unobtrusive as possible (see Appendix F).

Observations were made from vantage points that allowed interactions to be seen without interfering with them directly. The observations totaled six hours per dyad, with observations spread over the subsequent three to four weeks. Each observation session lasted two hours, and was conducted only if both parent and child were present. Rather than adhering to a rigid time frame, the duration of the observation visits was guided by Yin's (2009) explanation that the stopping point at which a researcher has collected enough data is decided by whether at least two forms of evidence correspond with each main topic, and whether that evidence makes it possible to address rival hypothesis. Parents' availability was also sometimes a factor, and the distribution of the observations and the time of day used over the observation weeks sometimes needed to be altered according to parents' schedules. This meant that for one parent, there were five

observation visits needed to total at least six hours of observation, and to ensure the collection of enough evidence as indicated above.

Observation visit scheduling occurred in collaboration with the parents, using a calendar made for each parent. Parents were asked about the best times to observe them at home for two to hours with their children. These times were written on the calendars, and parents were contacted to confirm each visit before it was to occur. Parents were informed that they would not be expected to interact with or cater to the researcher's needs, and that they could simply proceed as they normally would with their day, to the extent that this was possible. Parents were informed and reminded that there was no expectation that they interact with their child for the duration of every observation visit, or at all, and that the aim of the study was to understand what typically occurs. An effort was made to observe at different times of day, and to accommodate parent's work schedules if they were employed, as well as the children's schedules if they attended an early childhood program.

The language portion of the DIAL 4 was given to each child, to get a general picture of his or her most current expressive, receptive language, and phonemic awareness level. This assessment was conducted at kitchen tables, using the materials included with the assessment. The assessment duration varied depending on each child's cooperation and abilities. For Beatrice, Catarina's, Dona's and Elsa's children, this screening was given at the beginning of the second observation session. For Angela and Francisca's children, it was given at the end of the third and final observation session. The decision was made to change the timing of the screening to avoid the possibility that

the tasks involved would influence parent's interactions with their children during subsequent observation visits, as briefly noted during the observation visit immediately following the administration of the screenings for Beatrice's and Catarina's children.

An effort to take very detailed and vivid notes was made while observing interactions in each parent-child dyad. See observation protocols in Appendices D and E. Every effort was made to avoid interfering with or distracting parents from their interactions with their children. Interrupting their daily practices by conversing with them, especially when they are engaged in, or likely to begin an interaction, was always avoided. To avoid unintentionally influencing parents' interactions by modeling language and literacy practices for them, observations were made using the role of a passive participant. During observations, an iPad application called Notability was used to take the observation field notes. The observation forms were used within this application. When parents were not interacting with their children during a particular observation period, a list including the time, activities occurring, and any researcher comments was compiled. When and if a child and parent began talking, reading, or engaging in other interactions that involved print, language, or direct teaching of language or literacy elements, running records of the interaction were taken. This method of taking naturalistic observation was used during the pilot study. The observation form was changed slightly for this study to better utilize the iPad. Storybook sharing and print teaching interactions may also be video recorded, as described below. Notability can be utilized to take these video and audio recordings, as well as photos. During each observation visit, parental consent for videos, photos, and audio recordings

was reconfirmed, and parents were reminded that they can immediately stop any recording at any time. They were also allowed to view any recording made. See below for specific information regarding the recording of audio and video data.

Naturalistic observations were connected with the videos by indicating in the observational notes the context of the interaction that was recorded (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). Haw and Hadfield (2011) advise deciding a priori not only who will be in the videos, but when and where the videos will take place. Winter (1989) notes that deciding what to place in the video frame is similar to the “*bounding*” used in case study research. This *bounding* is accomplished by deciding when filming of a phenomena will start and stop, and the contexts under which the filming will take place (Winter, 1989). With that advice in mind, video data collection proceeded as follows. If parents read a story with their child, or engaged in language or print teaching, this interaction was sometimes video recorded using a mobile device, if thirty minutes of video data has not already been taken that day. To avoid the potential difficulty of being overwhelmed with video data, video recordings were limited to no more than twenty minutes during each visit (Haw & Hadfield, 2011). Recordings began when the parent or child responded to a verbal or nonverbal request for or suggestion regarding beginning one of these interactions. Recordings ended when the conversational topics changed, the book was complete, the parent or child transitioned to another activity, or when a thirty minute daily total had been reached. The video frame included the parent, the focus child in the dyad, and any other family member that was taking part in that particular interaction. The frame was be

positioned so that the torsos, faces, and hands of the parent and the focus child were visible all at the same time.

As spontaneous conversations between the parents and their children were recorded in written summary and verbatim form in the naturalistic observation notes as they occurred, some were also audio recorded while notes were being taken. A comment was added to the field notes indicating that an audio recording had been made at that point in the observation session. Recordings began when the parent or child initiated some conversations, and ended when the conversational interaction ended. Sometimes more multiple conversations were recorded in a row. Singing and was recorded if it occurred. No more than twenty minutes of audio recording was taken during each observation visit. Again, all interviews, discussed below, were audio recorded in their entirety.

Parents were given and asked to fill out the parent questionnaire at the end of the second observation visit, occurring in week three. This process involved first reviewing the document with the parent and being available to the parent as it was filled out, or asking the questions orally and filling it out for the parent if the parent was unable to do so. This questionnaire was collected when completed, stored in a secure office cabinet, then digitized.

The first interview occurred at the end of week three, after three observation visits, and the last interview at the end of week four. Parents were given the option of having the interviews at their homes, their child's program, or a nearby library. Every parent chose to have the interviews in their homes. Each interview took from thirty



minutes to two hours, depending on the amount of information each parent wanted to share. As there were several questions that asked parents to consider their ideas about children's language and literacy development, each parent was asked to think about their children's development in these areas prior to the first interview, at the end of the preceding observation visit.

Without suggesting specifics regarding what they might collect, parents were asked at the end of week two to gather artifacts or take pictures that represent what they do with their child that they felt were valuable for their child's language or literacy development. At the final interview, parents were given an opportunity to share and discuss these artifacts if they had collected them. They were asked to describe them, and explain why they were chosen, and these explanations were recorded on the artifact description form (Appendix J). Three parents collected artifacts.

The final semi-structured interview was held after all observation visits were complete in week four. Parents were asked if there was anything else they would like to share that would help increase understanding of their interactions or their thoughts about their reading and language interactions with their children. Other questions that had been brought to the surface from the initial interview and previous observations were asked. For example, in the pilot study observations, books one parent read to her children seemed to be kept in a cloth bag. In the final interview, the parent was asked if this is indeed where she usually stores the books she shares with her children, and where she gets them. The parent confirmed that the books were always kept in the bag, and that she

often buys books from a big box store or from her older children's school book fairs. The rest of the interview was used for discussing the collected artifacts.

A closing visit was scheduled in week five at a time convenient to each parent, during which the primary researcher discussed an outline she had made explaining her understanding of the way each dyad engaged in emergent literacy interactions, how they feel about them, and what influences of these interactions the researcher perceived while engaging in her preliminary analysis of their observation and interview data. Parents were asked after each section of the outline about the description's accuracy and whether they thought anything had been left out or needed to be changed. Each parent received a \$75 gift card at this visit, or the toy bag later that week. Parent's input was considered during final analysis of the data, and incorporated into each case study report. This visit is further discussed in the trustworthiness section below.

### **Data Preparation**

Each interview was audio recorded with the parents' permission, and sent to a native Spanish speaker for transcription into Spanish. All interview data was transcribed verbatim in Spanish into written form using the suggested guidelines described by Friese (2014). According to these guidelines, each speaker was marked, and an empty line was entered between the turns of each speaker. When a speaker talked for a long time, that speaker's talk was depicted in one paragraph. Time stamps were used during transcription, line numbers were used, and the transcribed documents were checked for accuracy by the primary researcher and uploaded into ATLAS.ti. This method of transcription enabled the use of the software to identify specific quotations during

analysis. Interview data that were in Spanish remained in Spanish for the duration of the analysis. When translation into English was necessary for writing the results section, this translation was done by the researcher and checked by a native Spanish speaker.

Naturalistic observation notes taken during observations were checked for accuracy within twelve hours of each observation session. Details that were recalled that did not yet appear in the notes were added at that point. Audio recordings shorter than five minutes were used to “fill-in” written dialogue in the notes. Grammar, spelling, and formatting errors were also corrected. These notes were then added directly into ATLAS.ti for coding, along with the interview data.

The parent eligibility forms collected in the preliminary meeting were scanned and uploaded into ATLAS.ti. In the same way, the parent questionnaire was added to ATLAS.ti. Notes that were taken on the IEP diagnosis and speech/language therapy assessment results were also uploaded into ATLAS.ti.

Parent collected artifacts were reduced to photo or video form and uploaded into ATLAS.ti, as well as the artifact collection form created as each parent described the artifacts and why they were chosen. Following the Friese (2014) NCT model, video and audio data was uploaded directly into the ATLAS.ti software. In addition, the dialogue in each video recording, and audio recordings lasting more than five minutes was transcribed verbatim using ATLAS.ti, and synced with each recording using anchors.

During analysis, uploaded documents were sorted into document families. A separate document family was created which included all the documents related to each participant. In addition, a family (group file) containing each parent’s observation data

was created, as well as a family containing each parent's interview data. Other families were created during the data analysis process described below. Observation document families were also created according to document type. All documents and data were analyzed as described below.

### **Data Analysis**

Within and across case analyses was conducted to investigate the home emergent literacy and language interactions of the parent-child dyads. The analyses focused on interactions within these dyads, including those that related to print, conversation, and direct teaching of language, or literacy-related teaching by the parent. Analysis also focused on possible sociocultural and language socialization influences of these interactions. All data was analyzed with the aim of describing in detail the dyads and their home settings, their emergent literacy interactions, and what parent and child level sociocultural/language socialization characteristics seemed to influence these interactions.

As data was collected with the aim of providing such a description when analysis was complete, it was uploaded into ATLAS.ti and managed from there, as Computer Assisted Qualitative Analysis Software (CAQDAS) can be a very helpful tool for the qualitative researcher (Contreras, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Friese, 2014). ATLAS.ti is a software program that can be helpful for managing and analyzing diverse forms of case study data (Friese, 2014; Yin, 2009). This study incorporated computer assisted data analysis method called *Noticing things, collecting things, and thinking about things* (NCT), which was originally created by Seidel (1998), and has been adapted by Friese

(2014) to be used with ATLAS.ti. As recommended by Friese (2014), this method of analysis was used under the wider descriptive multiple case study methodology. Put simply, this method involved movement back and forth between noticing interesting elements in the stored data, collecting and organizing these elements, and reflecting on their meaning. Other experienced qualitative researchers who use such software recommend using the *same* analysis model when using Computer Assisted Qualitative Analysis Software (CAQDAS; Bazeley & Richards, 2000). While ATLAS.ti was used to help in the management and analysis of the data, it was not used to do the analysis automatically, as that is not what the software is designed to do (Friese, 2014). It simply made storage, management, coding, and reflection on the data easier, more nimble, and more secure. It aided in the recording, modification, merging, and matching of codes and coded sections, made it possible to search for words and data with certain characteristics, and to attach notes to various elements.

NCT was used as follows. Memos and preliminary codes were generated in the Noticing stage. A preliminary list of apriori codes was derived primarily from the literature review, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and the pilot study. These codes were descriptive in nature (Contreras, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the Collecting stage, conceptually or thematically related items or quotations from the data were categorized under corresponding codes that were derived in the Noticing stage. Each descriptive code was clearly defined, and recorded using the comments function in ATLAS.ti. After and during coding, in the Thinking stage, patterns were noted and reflected upon in order to fully address the research questions, and more document

families were created. A more in depth description of the coding procedure is explained below.

### **Data Analysis Description**

**Data coding.** Data coding was used to analyze the field notes, the audio and video transcriptions, the interview transcriptions, as well as some of the answers on the parent questionnaires. Data coding is commonly used in case study research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The coding procedure is described in detail below, followed by an explanation of the within and across case analysis that was conducted after coding was complete.

The coding scheme incorporated some of the Miles and Huberman (1994) coding procedures into the multilevel thematic coding described in Friese, (2014). It proceed as follows: 1) Each form of data above was examined in its entirety, both in raw and prepared form, to gain a holistic sense of it and what it may mean. 2) A list of codes or primary topics/themes under which meanings may fall was used and adapted, as it was applied to the prepared data during a “first pass” through each portion of each form of prepared data. This preliminary list of codes originated from the results of the literature review and pilot study. Specifically, it came from the various emergent literacy interaction types, and the sociocultural and language socialization factors that have been identified in the literature which seem evident in the responses of the parents. Most of these initial codes were those that identified or described the various segments of the data corresponding to each of the four emergent literacy interaction types: print based, conversation based, direct literacy teaching, and language teaching. Others related to

influences of these interactions that seemed evident in the data. This list of initial codes was revised based on the themes that emerged from the data. These primary codes were descriptive in nature. 3) Once each piece of data had been read once and initial codes were developed and defined and had received primary codes, a second pass was made through the each document in an effort to pick up secondary codes or themes. Various characteristics of the interactions and influences were identified in this second level of coding. These secondary codes related to context in which each type of interaction occurred. These secondary codes were also descriptive in nature. For example, conversational interactions received a code that indicated whether they occurred during the normal routine, play, dramatic play, or storybook sharing. They each were then coded further, indicating whether they were about the here and now or were decontextualized. As analysis of the data continued, other codes were added to further understand the data. These codes described characteristics of the interactions. They usually described specific strategies that were used by parents as they had conversational, print-based, language teaching, and literacy teaching interactions with their children. For example, after coding the context under which conversations occurred and whether they were decontextualized or about the here and now, segments of parents' utterances received codes. These codes indicated whether a yes-no or an open-ended question was asked, whether the parent clarified what the child said, repeated it, expanded upon it, defined a word or asked the child to do so, gave a causal explanation, or gave a directive. The context and specific strategies used were coded for language teaching interactions,

literacy teaching interactions, and print-based interactions as well. Refer to appendix J to view the coding dictionary that contains the codes and their definitions.

In addition to codes relating to interactions and their characteristics, codes indicating influential socio-cultural, language socialization, and parent and child factors were added. Rather than delineating which segments of parent dialogue, observation notes, or interview transcripts related to language socialization versus socio-cultural factors, these factors were combined under one first level code, *cultural*. Second level codes were created under each of these codes to better understand the different kinds of parent, child, and cultural factors that appeared in the data. For example, some of the cultural factors to which parents referred related to experiences that parents explained as influential from their childhoods, and others parents explained were influential from experiences in their adulthoods. Some child factors observed or noted by the parents were related to their children's language abilities or disabilities, or to their children's behavior or ability to pay attention. Some parent factors prevalent in the data related to parents' ideas about language and literacy development or instruction, and others related to factors reflective of the parents' current experiences or reality such as a busy work schedule.

To aid in later analysis, code families were created during the first and second level coding process. Separate families were created containing each kind of interaction. Codes families that related to interaction contexts and strategies noticed in each interaction type were also created. In addition, code families were created holding codes that were related to sociocultural and language socialization factors and grouped together



under *culture*. A code family relating to parent factors was created, as well as one for child factors. Other code families were created for those codes that related to parents' ideas, parents' realities, childhood cultural factors, and current cultural factors.

There came a point at which existing codes applied to most of the data and the need to create new codes to tag the data was reduced. Most of these secondary codes fit under the initial primary codes. Some primary and secondary codes were eliminated if they were not used or only applied to a few segments of the data. The two-level coding hierarchy resulted, and the coding book that documents these codes and their definitions was built and saved in ATLAS.ti. 4) After the second coding pass, each document was read through a third time and coding was checked again. At this point, patterns seemed evident in the data, and more document families were created to address the research questions (Contreras, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Friese, 2014). A document family was created that included those of the parents who have lived in the U.S. for 14 or more years, versus less than 14 years. They were divided this way because these groups were equal. Other document families were made that included documents from parents who had children with the most severe speech language difficulties, and those who had children with less severe difficulties. These groups were equal. Another document family was created containing the documents of parents who had more educational experiences, and another family of documents from parents with fewer of these experiences.

Naturalistic observation notes, video and audio observation transcripts, interview transcripts, and digitized artifacts were analyzed with the same coding scheme. All data was coded continuously throughout the data collection process and an effort was made to

code each document with at least primary level codes before the next visit to that dyad, or at least to read or view each document and prepare it for analysis. Interpretation of the data began to occur simultaneously with data collection, so that this ongoing analysis could inform subsequent observations, and the final interview questions.

Information from the parent questionnaire, the eligibility form, and the document review was analyzed in an effort to provide descriptive information on each dyad. Several descriptive codes were incorporated into the coding scheme for this purpose, but not every portion of each of these documents was coded.

**Within and across case analysis.** Within and across case analysis are commonly undertaken as a part of multiple case study research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Single and across case analysis was conducted of the emergent literacy and language interactions between these parents and their three and four year-old children receiving speech therapy, as well as possible influences. Both similarities and differences between cases were analyzed.

The analyzed interactions within these dyads included those that related to print, conversation, and direct teaching of language or literacy by the parent. To aid in the within case analysis of these interactions, in an effort to discover how each dyad engaged in the interactions, the coded data were examined with the following sub-questions in mind:

- How does the parent scaffold or guide the child's participation in the interaction?

- When does the parent engage in each kind of interaction? To what extent do they occur during routine times, as part of the parent's household duties, during the child's playtime, or at specific times set aside for the activity?
- In conversations and storybook sharing, what is the level of decontextualization, and to what extent are open and closed questions used?
- Who is present during the interactions?

To aid in targeted within case analysis of the sociocultural and language socialization influences of the interactions, the coded data were examined with the following sub-questions in mind:

- How do the parent and the child feel about the various types of interactions?
- How do child abilities, talents, and interests influence the interactions?
- What material resources, including toys and literacy related toys, books, and games are available in the home?
- How is media used in the home?
- Why do the parent and child use the language/s they use in the interactions?
- What is each parent's philosophy of reading and language development?
- How do the demographic details derived from the demographic questionnaire relate to the way interactions occur in the home?
- If there are siblings in the home, how might they influence interactions?
- What elements of the parent's childhood experiences seem to be at work during interactions?

During both kinds of analysis, the coding that was explained previously was done continually. Patterns that emerged within each case in reference to the above sub-questions and those others that develop were noted, along with reflections, using research memos within ATLAS.ti.

During the process of within-case analysis, after coding was complete, quotes that were collected under each of the code families were read and reflected upon to reach an understanding of the various types of interactions in which parents engaged with their children, and what the characteristics of these interactions were. For example, all conversational interactions each dyad had were examined together. In addition, for example, all directives for a particular dyad were examined together. To gain a deeper understanding about what influences affected individual dyads, quotes that indicated cultural influences, for example, were collected and viewed together. To confirm the patterns in the data that seemed to be emerging, ATLAS.ti's Primary Documents Table tool was used to count the frequency of coded segments in each code family for each dyad. This method helped the researcher confirm her impression, for example, that certain parents engaged in more conversational interactions than language teaching interactions. The frequency counts generated with the use of this tool were carefully scrutinized by comparing the results to the list of quotations of each parent.

The coding results in the interview and observation data of each parent was read and reflected on several times, until an accurate description of each parent's interactions, interaction characteristics, the context under which each interaction took place, and the strategies each parent used during these interactions was understood and could be put in

outline form. In addition, the coded interview and observation data was read and reflected upon until an understanding or impression of the cultural, parent and child factors influenced the interactions was reached and could be communicated in writing in outline form. These outlines were created, keeping in mind that they would be shared with each parent during Member Checking, and should represent what was learned from the observation and interview sessions.

After the single case analysis, across-case analysis was conducted based on the preliminary conceptual framework. In across-case analysis, quotes belonging to the various code families were gathered from the document families. Quotes coded under each interaction type for each dyad were compared to other dyads. For example, Francisca and Diego's conversational interactions were compared with Angela and Nina's conversational interactions, and those of all of the other dyads. In this way the types, contexts, and strategies employed during the various interactions could be compared across dyads. Influences were compared between dyads in a similar way. For example, one parents coded quotations relating to their childhood memories could be compared to the same category of quotes of another parent. To confirm patters that were perceived by reading the quotations, the Primary Documents Table was used to count quoted segments, but these counts were heavily scrutinized and checked against the quotes in the text. It was possible using this tool to understand that a particular parent indicated that current socio-cultural factors are more influential than those in the parent's childhood, but that a different parent indicated more cultural influences related to childhood experiences.

In addition to making comparison between and across dyads, comparisons were also made between various dyad subgroups. The document families that were created after the conclusion of the coding process represented these subgroups.. In this stage of analysis, equal dyad subgroups were compared. For example, dyads with more years in the U.S. were compared with an equal group of dyads here for fewer years. It was during this process of comparing dyad subgroups that confounding characteristics also present in the dyads had to be considered.

During across case and within case analysis, comparisons were made across the different forms of data, within and across the various document families into which the documents had been sorted. For example, what each parent said in the interviews was compared with what was recorded during the observations, and these were compared with parents' own collected artifacts and explanations. Patterns discovered within a case were searched for in other cases. Interview data was isolated and compared across cases. During analysis, every effort was made to arrive at results that were trustworthy.

### **Trustworthiness**

As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the validity of the study was ensured in several ways. First, triangulation was used (see Table 2) in that many data collection methods were employed, including naturalistic observation, semi structured interviews, the collection of artifacts, and video and audio recordings, as well as speech therapy assessment records and parent questionnaires so that the data would give a general, overall picture of what is learned in reference to the research questions. What was learned from the observation was used to cross-check what is said in the interviews

and vice versa. For example, if a parent was not observed engaging in storybook sharing, they were asked during the interview if they do engage in that interaction and how.

Second, these sources of information were used to provide rich descriptions. The interview questions were structured so that they were open-ended and encouraged the parents to elaborate. Clarifying questions followed their answers if these were likely to help a clearer understanding develop. Detailed field notes were taken, and during and after the observations extensive comments and memos were made that noted what was being learned on an ongoing basis.

Third, an elaborate, thorough, and rigorous inter-rater process was implemented to fortify the trustworthiness of the study. Another professional, fluent in Spanish, functioned as a second coder or rater. Further refinement to the codes was completed during the first phase of the inter-rater process. For example, a numbered coding system was tried and then abandoned when it became obvious that any inter-rater would have difficulty interpreting codes that were so vague and abstract. The names for codes in each category were aligned so that similarities and differences between the codes were clearer. For example, all interaction codes received a prefix of ! Int. All influence-related codes received a prefix of \* Infl. All first level interaction category codes received a suffix of *CAT* to indicate that they referred to an entire interaction of that category. In addition, when some codes were renamed, they were renamed so that an inter-rater could read them and automatically know their definitions. For example, an influence code that indicated that a cultural influence related to a parent's childhood experiences received the code \* *Infl. Cultural-(Childhood)*.

After codes were refined and merged if needed, the inter-rater demonstrated by her performance in practice sessions that she understood the codes. She also demonstrated in practice sessions that she understood code definitions, each step in the coding process, how to use ATLAS.ti software, and the importance and purpose of the inter-rater for a study. Subsequently, she was given a packet with 10 documents to code independently using all of the first and second level codes that the primary researcher had used in the same documents. She had not previously practiced coding using these documents. The inter-rater returned the packet once she had coded it and a rate of independent coding was calculated. The primary researcher and the inter-rater then met to discuss each document. They discussed in detail any differences between the codes they had used for each document. Sometimes the inter-rater conceded to the primary researcher, giving her reasons; sometimes the primary researcher conceded, and sometimes the two did not reach agreement on a coding difference. By the end of this process a 94% level of negotiated agreement between the coding by the second coder and the researcher was reached using the formula below (Miles & Huberman, 1994):

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$

Forth, cultural informants were consulted on a regular basis regarding the recruitment process, and during coding, and during the interpretation of the coding results. Cultural informants can be helpful when a researcher is from a different culture than are the participants. They can also be helpful resources in the recognition and interpretation of observational data (Morgan & Guevara, 2008). One cultural informant



was a researcher in Mexico, who received her Doctor of Education degree at Harvard. She has much expertise in the area of language and literacy, among other areas. Another cultural informant was the director of community involvement at the Sarah Y. Austin Head Start Center. Another was an Occupational Therapist, who also functioned as the inter-rater. Both of the above cultural informants are native Spanish speakers and though they are originally from Venezuela, they have experience working with members of the Latino community in North Carolina. The informants were available to discuss progress in answering research questions based on the data.

Fifth, and most crucial to the accuracy of the results of this study, Member Checking was utilized. When within-case data analysis was nearly complete, a detailed written outline of each parent's case summary was discussed thoroughly with each parent and they were asked if there is anything missing or evidence of any misunderstanding. Each outline listed the demographic information of each parent, the types of interactions that were observed and reported, the context under which each type of interaction usually occurred, the strategies parents commonly used during these interactions, and the various parent, child, and cultural factors that seemed to influence interactions. Parents were asked at the end of each section if the information was accurate, or if they had any information to add. If a parent added or recommended changes to the outline, it was adjusted immediately to reflect that change. This process ensured researcher biases did not contaminate the raw data. Each parent strongly agreed with their results summary, and some parents added new information that was incorporated into that summary.

**Ethical Issues**

In order to protect the participants from any harm that could come to them through or because of participating in the study, Internal Review Board approval was sought and given before recruitment began. Guidelines to protect the confidentiality of the data and the safety of the parents and children were followed meticulously. Having an outsider present in a parent's home could make them feel uncomfortable, so every effort was made to respect each parent's schedule and comfort level. Only those aspects of the home environment that influenced emergent literacy interactions, and data on those interactions themselves, were the focus of the study. Only notes or pictures/videos/audio of interactions that related to the substance of the study were included in the data, and video/pictures/audio were only taken with permission. During the interviews and observations, no other observation or interview information from another family was disclosed. Parents were informed that they did not have to answer any interview question they did not want to answer, and that they could stop the collection of video data if they or their children were uncomfortable. Care was taken that the presence of an observer or interviewer did not impede the parent's role in helping their child with speech or language development or keeping them from attending to the needs of the children or household. If extreme family difficulties needed immediate attention, a referral was made to parents. The primary researcher was prepared, in the event of an emergency, to seek assistance. She was also prepared to respond by pausing data collection if children indicated that being observed at a particular time was upsetting them, or that they were withholding their consent.

### **Conclusion**

Specific methods were consistently applied in uniform ways while recruiting participants, collecting data, and analyzing that data. These procedures were utilized to gain as complete, rich, and accurate a picture of the emergent literacy interactions within each dyad and the factors that may influence those interactions as was possible. The applied procedures enabled the primary researcher to analyze each case, compare cases with one another, and to compare groups of cases with one another. In the following chapters, the results of this analysis, are presented in two chapters.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **WITHIN CASE RESULTS**

Analysis of the observational and interview data shed light onto the types of emergent literacy interactions between six mothers and their children, the contexts in which these interactions occurred, and the specific characteristics of these interactions. These aspects varied from dyad to dyad. In addition, each dyad had a unique combination of parent, child, and cultural factors that influenced these interactions. In this section, literacy and language interaction types and the factors that seemed to influence them are discussed.

The results of the within case analysis of each dyad begin with an explanation of the time span during which the observation and interviews were conducted. Next, the context under which each type of interactions usually took place will be discussed. For example, for conversational and language teaching interactions, the description will note whether these interactions occurred during the child's normal routine, play, or at some other time. Next, the various conversational, language teaching, print oriented, and literacy teaching interactions will be described. Next, the methods the mother typically used during these interactions will be described. For example, some mothers taught new words to their children in language teaching interactions by naming objects, and others gave definitions. Illustrative examples of conversations will be included for each dyad. After the various emergent literacy interactions are described, the next section will

address the various influences that seemed to affect these interactions. Cultural factors, both those related to the parent's childhood culture, and those evident currently will be described. Influential parent factors such as those related to parent's ideas about reading and language development, for instance, will be explained. Influential factors related to the children will be described also, including their interests, abilities, and disabilities that seem to influence interactions. Besides detailing influential parent and cultural factors, influential factors related to the children will be described, including the child interests, abilities, and disabilities that seem to influence interactions. After the descriptions of interactions and influences in each dyad are described, a summary of each case will be presented. Finally, after these within case results are presented, a brief overview of all cases as a whole will follow.

### **Angela and Nina**

Observational data and interview data was collected in late December through early January between Angela and her three-year-old daughter, Nina. During these sessions, Angela's six-year-old son and five-year-old daughter were present. During the last observation, Nina was feeling slightly sick with asthma symptoms, and rested some in Angela's arms. The interviews were conducted in two visits that followed the observation sessions.

### **Interaction Characteristics**

During observation sessions, Angela primarily engaged in conversational interactions with Nina. Most of these interactions took place in the context of Nina's normal routine, especially self-care, and occurred in the front room where the TV and a

large fold out bed are located. Many of the mother's sentences were short. During two sessions, Nina began conversational interactions by going into the kitchen and taking out packages of food, as in the example below. Nina is jumping, whining, and reaching for the freezer.)

*M: (She puts the phone Nina had been playing with out of reach into her pocket, and opens the fridge) Eh? Eh? No hay nada; no hay nada. (She closes the fridge.)*

*C: (She cries)*

*M: (She opens freezer and lifts up Nina). Que quieres, que?*

*C: (She reaches for a box of corn dogs.)*

*M: (She gets them out and puts them on a plate.)*

*C: (She reaches for them on the plate)*

*M: Frio, Frio! (She puts them on a plate and in microwave). Dos. Dos*

*C: (She touches the 2 button on the microwave and starts it. She holds the handle, waiting.)*

*M: Deja. Te deja. Deja la para que se caliente.*

*C: (She waits.)*

*S: Yeah! !Esta listo!*

*C: !Listo! !Bebe!*

*M: Isabel. (She is correcting her and wanting her to use the correct name for her sister.)*

*C and S: (They go into the living room to eat their corn dogs.)*

(A-Observation One)

[M: (She puts the phone out of reach into her pocket, and opens the fridge) Eh?

Eh? There is nothing. (She closes the fridge.)

C: (She cries.)

M: (She opens freezer, and lifts up Nina.) What do you want, what?

C: (She reaches for a box of corn dogs.)

M: (She gets them out and puts them on a plate.)

C: (She reaches for them on the plate.) Two. Two.

C: (She touches the 2 button on the microwave and starts it. She holds the handle, waiting.)

M: Leave it. You leave it. Leave it so it will warm.

C: (She waits.)

S: Yeah! It is ready!

C: Ready! Baby!

M: Isabel. (She is correcting her and wanting her to use the correct name for her sister.)

C and S: (They go into the living room to eat their corn dogs.)

(A-Observation One)

During another session, Nina and Angela interacted verbally as Nina applied Frizz Buster cream to her very long, thick hair. Angela supervised while repeatedly warning Nina to keep the cream out of her eyes and only put it on her hair. Like this interaction, many of the conversational interactions were made of three to twelve turns, and usually involved many repeated directives and very short conversational turns. Additionally, these conversational interactions usually involved some nonverbal turn taking, especially on Nina's part, as in the following interaction.

*C: ¿Agua? (She has brought in a bottle of bubbles and hands it to Mom)*

*M: (She works on opening the bottle.)*

*C: (She postures as if needing to go to the bathroom.)*

*M: Baño. Vete por baño.*

*C: (She goes to bathroom and returns.) Mío.*

*M : Si, tuyo. ( She blows bubbles)*

*C: (She jumps and pops them, squealing.)*

*M: Yo. (She takes another turn blowing.)*

(A-Observation 2)

[C: Water? (She has brought in a bottle of bubbles and hands it to M)

M: (She works on opening the bottle.)

C: (She postures as if needing to go to the bathroom.)

M: Bathroom. Go to the bathroom.

C: (She goes to bathroom and returns.) Mine.

M : Yes, yours ( She blows bubbles.)

C: (She jumps and pops them, squealing.)

M: Me. (She takes a turn.)]

(A-Observation 2)

In addition to the nonverbal turn-taking above, during the first observation session Nina lay in Angela's lap and Angela and Nina went back and forth as Angela walked a stuffed toy elephant up Nina's tummy, and tickled her nose with it as well. Nina would giggle and the action would repeat. While Angela used a couple of phrases such as,



“Don’t scream. Why do you scream?” much of the turns were nonverbal. While Angela injected the occasional comment and named the elephant’s ear, little dialogue occurred. As both Angela and Nina were smiling and laughing, this seemed enjoyable and stimulating interaction for both of them.

Angela used many directives in their conversational interactions, and these seemed to be spoken mostly in an effort to maintain order and safety. Some labeling and descriptions were also used. Most utterances Angela used were under four words long. All observed conversation dealt with the here and now. Both open and closed-ended questions were observed at about the same proportions, with some questions being open-ended when asking what Nina wanted, and why she was crying (which she was not) while playing the elephant game. Though most often Angela responded in some way to Nina’s initiations, sometimes she did not.

In addition to conversational interactions, Angela was observed to engage in language teaching interactions during one session. These interactions occurred most often during Nina’s normal routines. They involved Angela naming/labeling objects, rephrasing or recasting what Nina had said, and pronouncing words so she could repeat them. The following example illustrates these types of exchanges:

*C: (She brings over a dress) [Approximates vestido “e EE o”]*

*M: (She helps her take off her other clothes.) Vestido. Dice vestido.*

*C: Hugh?*

*M: Vestido. (She has to interrupt this interaction to help with toileting.)*

*M: Esa ropa sucia., OK niña. (She hands her the dirty outfit and C puts it in the hamper.)*

(A-Observation One)

[C: (She brings over a dress. (Approximates dress “e EE o”)

M: (She helps her take off her other clothes.) Dress. Say, “dress.”

C: Hugh?

M: Dress. (She has to interrupt this interaction to help with toileting)

C: (She leaves abruptly to pee on the potty chair.)

M: This is dirty. OK girl. (She hands her the dirty outfit and C puts it in the hamper.)]

(A-Observation One)

During the interviews, Angela indicated that she does a great deal more of the kind of language teaching indicated in the above dialogue than what was observed. She indicated that she teaches Nina words for the things she wants during her normal routine by saying them for her and asking her to repeat them. Again, Angela indicated that these interactions take place most often during Nina’s normal routine. She spoke little about conversing with Nina. She also explained that she does not play often with Nina, even when she is alone with her while the older children are in school.

During the observation sessions, no print or literacy teaching interactions were observed. During the interviews, Angela indicated that she does not read to Nina, though she implied that she has on some occasions. She mentioned that parents can label pictures describe attributes of the pictures such as their color.

**Interaction Influences**

During the observations and interviews, much was learned about not only the characteristics of the various interactions that were discussed above, but also about the possible factors that influence these interactions. Parent, cultural, and child factors were influential.

Child factors seemed the most influential of emergent literacy interactions between Angela and Nina. The primary child factor to influence the conversational and language teaching interactions observed in this dyad was Nina's extreme difficulty with verbal communication. She frequently whined to initiate interactions and waited for Angela to respond. Usually Angela asked, "What?" or "What do you want?" When Nina talked, her utterances were usually very short, and her words lacked most consonant sounds. During other interactions such as bubble blowing, helping to administer puffs from an asthma inhaler, and putting on hair cream, Nina's difficulty following directions and her reluctance to comply with them were very influential. Angela often told Nina what to do in a repetitive way in an effort to keep her safe. Angela shared during interviews that Nina's behavioral difficulties also influence the infrequent nature of storybook sharing. Angela explained that one reason she reads books infrequently to Nina is because she has damaged books Angela has bought for her in the past. When books are in the home, they are kept in a book bag in the closet, and their access is closely monitored to keep damage from occurring.

In addition to child factors, parent factors were also found to be very influential on the emergent literacy interactions in which Angela and Nina engage. While Angela

indicated on one of the parent questionnaires that she was not very concerned about Nina's language development, she explained during interviews that she is very interested in helping Nina improve her ability to communicate. Angela remarked that Nina is improving her language skills because she is teaching her to ask for what she wants. Angela indicated she thinks it is very important that parents talk to their children and help their children with their homework. She indicated that she feels this way because she has noticed that some parents do not help their children, but instead act as if children are a disturbance. She does not like how their children behave. Angela sees herself as responsible for teaching Nina to talk better.

In addition to the Angela's commitment to helping Nina develop her language skills, Angela's ideas about how children learn how to talk and how parents should help them to talk are influential of Angela's interactions with her daughter. She explained in the interviews that she believes children learn to talk when their parents identify objects in their environment and let them repeat these words. Angela explained that she thinks it is very important that parents teach their children the words they need to make verbal requests in the context of their normal routine. She explained that she likes to help Nina with her language skills, and that she is pleased with how Nina is better making verbal requests than she was before and, "...could not say hardly anything." While Angela does have ideas about reading development and teaching reading, most influential is her opinion that working with Nina on her language development is much more important than addressing pre-literacy skills at this time. Consequently, while Angela thinks that

one can begin introducing the vowel sounds to their three-year-olds, and follow this by teaching them about words later, she does not yet do so with Nina.

In addition to the parent factors mentioned above, Angela mentioned various aspects of her current life experience that impact her language and literacy interactions with Nina. The parent factor that Angela mentioned as most highly influential of her language and literacy interactions with Nina is her own stress level. Not only does Angela work part-time while caring for three children and the home, she is also a single parent. Though her mother does assist with childcare and shopping, Angela discussed how she is often feels stressed and feels the press of time. *“No tengo tiempo ni para mi.”* [I don’t have time for myself either.] The many duties Angela is responsible for at home and at her part-time job leave little time, in Angela’s view, to sit down and play with Nina outside of meals and basic care routines, though she does report that she enjoys the interactions she does have with her daughter. Another parental factor that influences Angela and Nina’s interactions is the degree to which Angela can communicate and read in English. She explained that she knows some words in English but cannot read English, and this makes it hard for her to engage in storybook sharing with Nina. She explained that she has trouble finding books in Spanish. This difficulty with English makes it necessary for her to ask her brother to help her oldest child with his homework, and the same help may be needed when Nina begins kindergarten.

In addition to parent and child factors that influence interactions, various cultural factors related to socio-economic, parenting, and childhood aspects were observed and reported to be influential of the language and literacy interactions Angela currently has

with her daughter. These factors influenced the characteristics of the interactions, as well as Angela's ideas about language and literacy development that affected the interactions.

The language and literacy development of Angela's older son has influenced Angela's ideas about those areas. When asked about what helped to shape her ideas about language development, Angela explained that her seven-year-old son also had difficulty with his communication skills when he was younger, and that he received speech therapy for a time. Though Nina was not currently receiving speech and language services during the weeks when observations were conducted, Angela indicated that she had gone to the school system, had her daughter evaluated, and anticipated that the speech therapy she will be receiving will help her as it did her son who no longer has language difficulties. While the work sent home with her son from school has helped Angela understand more about reading development and form some ideas about the teaching of reading, so far these ideas have not affected or increased her pre-literacy interactions with her daughter.

Another factor that influences Angela's emergent literacy interactions with her daughter is her current socioeconomic status. One example Angela reported pertaining to this dynamic is that they do not own a computer or have Wi-Fi access. She also indicated that another reason she was reluctant to engage in story sharing with Nina is that the books are expensive, even the ones that can be purchased during book fairs at her son's school. Also, she explained that the fines attached to replacing a damaged library book often keep her from having her oldest son check storybooks out from the library for her to read with Nina. An additional factor that Angela mentioned as being influential of her

ability to address Nina's language needs is her difficulty bringing Nina to assessment and speech/language therapy appointments due to lack of transportation. Angela does not own a car and must borrow her mother's car, which is shared with other adults in the home as well. When Angela took her daughter to her first assessment appointment, she was disheartened and confused that other appointments would be needed before her child could receive therapy. By the time Angela was able to bring Nina to these appointments, at least one of which was missed and rescheduled, Nina had already turned three. The involved agencies do not provide home-based therapy to children once they turned three, and have transitioned from infant toddler to preschool services.

Cultural aspects present in the home were also influential. In spite of negative effects of their having little money, the family did have access to some resources that influenced language interactions between Angela and Nina. During observations, it was noted that the family does have cable television. The TV was always on during the observation sessions, and was commonly heard at medium volume in the background during conversational interactions. Programs were usually children's programs. TV programs were in Spanish, but were not always very educational and Angela never engaged Nina in discussion about them. The heating unit was another source of loud background noise. It is unclear how much this background noise may have interfered with Nina's ability to communicate with Angela. In addition to the TV, Angela was also observed to have a smartphone with data capability and texting, and during one observation, she and Nina watched a video on it together. Angela was also able to provide her older daughter with a child's tablet computer, and Nina and she were able to

use it to look at and comment briefly during the last observation session on family photos the older daughter had taken.

One important fact about the home environment was that the apartment was cluttered. Space was at a premium, as the fold out bed in the living room was always out, and it stayed up against a couch. The kitchen and living room were very full. This condition made it easy for Nina to happen upon items like hair cream and Friz Buster lotion. She seemed more likely to play with the empty trashcan or put on lip-gloss than play with a toy. Toys were kept in the closet. This family seemed to have access to sufficient food, often kept within view, enabling Nina to choose among many snacks and convenience foods, and to practice using language to request those items. There were many items on the kitchen table, and family members were seldom seen eating there. Probably for this reason, food was often prepared in the kitchen and eaten in the living room.

In addition to the socio-economic factors and Angela's experiences with parenting her older children, there are aspects of the culture in which Angela grew up that may be influential. When asked what childhood experiences related to language and literacy she engaged in with her parents, she quickly answered that she had none of them. She explained that she was not read to, sung to, or conversed with when she was a child. *"Pues uno nunca pude de leer libros (a mi) así y todo eso, nada, nada de esta."* [Well one never read books (to me) like that, or had any of that.] She explained that her parents did not teach her literacy skills such as letter names or sounds, or how to read words. Angela did not mention her own school experience as a child as influential of her



language or literacy interactions with her daughter, and did not mention any other language or literacy experience outside of her family or school as being influential either. It is possible that these circumstances could have contributed to her choosing not to do so with her daughter, but she did not indicate in the interviews that this was the case.

While Angela's childhood experiences may be influential of the interactions she has with her daughter currently, Angela also mentions that her faith, in the form of attendance at church, sometimes influences their language interactions. She reports that sometimes she sings some of the songs sung in church while at home. Aside from church, Angela did not indicate that any other community entity has been or is influential of her interactions with Nina. Angela mentioned that she has not recently attended any parent education classes, and that her most recent participation in parent education was several years ago. She received home visits from an agency that provides these to support parents of children at-risk in enhancing their children's development through parent-child interactions at home. She did not mention any interactions in which she currently engages with her daughter that were influenced by her past participation in the program. This program referred Angela to this study, and had previously discharged the family due to a lack of participation.

### **Summary**

Results indicate that Angela engages primarily in language teaching and conversational interactions with Nina. The conversational interactions involve many directives, and some non-verbal turn taking, and her sentences in these interactions are short. These interactions always relate to objects or actions in the here and now.

Language teaching interactions, like the conversational ones, occur most often in the context of Nina's normal routine. These interactions most often involve Angela giving Nina a word to name a desired object and having her repeat it. Storybook sharing is rare, and literacy teaching does not occur.

Angela's interactions with Nina are strongly influenced by Nina's difficulties with verbal communication, occasional difficulties with understanding what she is told, and her tendency to engage in impulsive behavior. These difficulties make talking about events outside of the immediate environment challenging, and storybook sharing difficult. In addition to these child factors, the high level of stress Angela feels as a single mother with a part time job reduces the time and energy Angela has to engage in play activities with Nina. Storybook sharing is made difficult also by Angela's self-reported low level of English literacy, and her lack of access to storybooks in Spanish. In spite of the lack of storybook sharing, and the brief exchanges she has with her daughter, Angela reports that she is committed to helping her improve her speech and language skills, and that she spends a lot of time trying to build her ability to communicate her basic needs.

In addition to the above factors, socioeconomic factors interfere with Angela's computer and Wi-Fi use, as well as transportation to bring Nina to evaluation and therapy appointments; however, she does seem to have sufficient resources to provide for her family's basic needs and cable TV services. Culturally, church songs were the one community factor mentioned as being influential of interactions. Childhood language and literacy experiences were reported as few or non-existent, it was not clear how

influential the low level of these effects the current language and literacy interactions Angela has with Nina.

### **Beatrice and Diana**

Observational data was taken of interactions between Beatrice and five-year-old daughter, Diana over three sessions in late November and early December. Two interviews were conducted over three sessions after the observations were completed. This parent shared artifacts during the last part of the second interview, and twenty minutes of observational data was taken before the interview on that visit. For all observations and interviews, the parent's older daughter and son were present in the home. The older daughter was involved in some of the interactions in the first observation.

### **Interaction Characteristics**

During the observation sessions, Beatrice primarily participated in conversational interactions with her daughter. Spanish was the only language used in conversation. These interactions took place in the kitchen during two sessions and in the living room during one session. The observed conversations primarily occurred during the first observation session during decoration of the family Christmas tree. The following dialogue is an example of one of these conversations:

*M: (Beatrice hands the ornaments to C and C takes them while sitting on the floor.) Mire, esto.*

*C: (She takes them.)*

*M: Que bonitos. Ten cuidado pa que estos no se rompen.*

*S: (She comes over and gives Diana one of the ornaments.)*

*C: (She walks over to the far side of the tree with the ornament she has, as all are putting on an ornament.) No mire a este otro chiquito.*

*M: A ver.*

*C: (She points to the floor.)*

*M: (She looks down) Oh!*

*C: (I cannot understand what she says to Beatrice here.)*

*M: (She crouches down with Diana and gently cradles an ornament on the tree.) Oh, si este es muy chiquito. Este es de Katy, dice “Katy”. (She seems to be pointing to print as she says this.) ¿Dónde está la tuya?*

*S: (Standing, she points elsewhere on the tree and makes a comment.)*

*M: (She looks up and points.) Ese la tuya esta. (They both get up as sister talks to Beatrice and Diana come to sister’s side of the tree.)*

*S: (She says she saw it yesterday)*

*M: ¡Oh, mira, candy, Diana! (She points to a candy cane on the tree now.)*

*C: (She goes over to look.) Mmhmm. Katy tiene uno chiquito y uno con xx?*

*M: Ugh hugh.*

(B-Observation 1)

[(Beatrice hands the ornaments to C and C takes them while sitting on the floor.)  
Look at this one.

*C: (She takes them.)*

*M: How pretty. Be careful so they don’t break.*

*S: (She comes over and has sister give her one of the ornaments.)*

*C: (She walks over to the far side of the tree with the ornament she has, as all are putting on an ornament.) Look at this little one.*

M: Let me see.

C: (She points to the floor.)

M: (She looks down) Oh!

C: (I cannot understand what she says to Beatrice here.)

M: (She crouches down with Diana and gently cradles an ornament on the tree.) Oh, yes, this is very small. This is Katy's; it says "Katy." (She seems to be pointing to print as she says this.) Where is yours?

S: (Standing, she points elsewhere on the tree and makes a comment.)

M: (She looks up and points.) This one is yours. (They both get up as sister talks to Beatrice and Diana, and Beatrice come to sister's side of the tree.)

S: (She says she saw it yesterday)

M: Oh, look, candy, Diana! (She points to a candy cane on the tree now.)

C: (She goes over to look.) Mmhmm. Katy has a little one and one with glitter?

M: Ugh hugh.]

(B-Observation 1)

As in the above conversations, Beatrice frequently described objects. Though she did sometimes use directives, they were not as common as descriptions. While most conversations were in the here and now, Beatrice and Diana did engage in some decontextualized conversation. The following is a portion of a longer conversation about Diana's fear of clowns that illustrates a decontextualized conversation. Beatrice and Diana are sitting next to each other on the couch and Beatrice is untangling a string of Christmas bells for the tree. She responds to something Diana has just said about clowns:

*M: ¿Y vas a tener miedo?*

*C: (Stands now while talking) Eh Papi?*

*M: Ugh ha.*

*C: Y él hace “Ahh! ¡El payaso!”*

*M: Ya que sí. (Nods head)*

*C: Y lo hizo el payaso Papa. El muy espanta.*

*M: ¿Payaso feo?*

*C: Ugh hugh.*

*M: ¿Y un payaso a quita una abuelita? ¿Alguien dijo a ti este?*

*C: No.*

*M: ¿Cómo? ¿Te da miedo los payasos?*

*C: Ugh hugh.*

*M: Mucho o poquito?*

*C: Mucho.*

*M: ¿Mucho?*

*C: Ugh hugh.*

*M: Pero está bien. Si no hacen nada.*

*C: Ugh hugh, si. ugh hugh.*

*M: Los payasos solo juegan. Y hacen chistes, y bromas. Y puede dan contento.*

*C: ¡No!*

*M: Si. Y... (I do not understand this comment.)*

*C: Pero-*

*M: Y se pintan. Se pintan los labios, um los ojos (Points to her eyes.) Y se ponen zapatos grandotes. (She touches her foot.) No daña los payasos.*

*C: ¿Porque están muy chiquitos?*

*M: No. (She gestures up.) [My audio gets bad for a moment.] No están peleando.*

*C: ¿Se ponen una nose así? (She touches her nose.)*

*M: (Nods) También.*

(B-Observation 1)

[M: Are you going to be afraid?

C: (Stands now while talking) Eh Daddy?

M: Ugh ha.

C: And he says, "Ahh! The clown!"

M: Yea. (Nods head)

C: And he did it (a clown?). He was scary.

M: It was a bad clown?

C: Ugh hugh.

M: And the clown took the granny? Someone told you that?

C: No.

M: What? Clowns scare you?

C: Ugh hugh.

M: A lot or a little?

C: A lot.

M: A lot?

C: Ugh hugh.

M: But clowns are good. They don't do anything bad.

C: Ugh hugh, yes. ugh hugh.

M: Clowns only play. And they make jokes. And they can give people contentment.

C: No!

M: Yes. And . . . (I do not understand this comment.)

C: But-

M: And they paint. They Paint their lips, um their eyes (Points to her eyes.) And they put on very large shoes. (She touches her foot.) They don't do harm, the clowns.

C: Because they are very small?

M: No. (She gestures up.) [My audio gets bad for a moment.] They don't normally fight.

C: They put on a nose like this? (She touches her nose.)

M: (Nods) That too.]

(B-Observation 1)

As above, Beatrice used closed-ended questions during the observed conversations between herself and Diana. She also sometimes expanded on what her daughter said during the conversations by repeating what she said and adding extra words. Dialogue was not the only kind of conversational interaction in which Beatrice engaged wither daughter. During one observation, Beatrice sang a verse of a common but gentle sounding Mexican folk song about The Coco, a monster that comes to eat or take away little babies that do not go to sleep. This interaction had a playful quality to it. Both Beatrice and Diana were smiling, and Beatrice giggled at the end of the verse.



In addition to the observational data, Beatrice reported in the interviews that she has many conversations with Diana. She explained that these conversations are most often about the best way to behave, as well as Diana's day at school. Beatrice explained that the conversations very often involve her explicitly sharing complex explanations for how to conduct oneself in social situations. She also indicated that she sometimes shares stories of her experiences growing up in Mexico. Further, Beatrice said that sometimes she sings at home those songs that she has heard in her Catholic church. She reported that she sometimes looks them up on You Tube using her cell phone to refresh her memory.

In addition to conversational interactions, during the observation sessions, Beatrice frequently engaged in language teaching interactions. These interactions occurred most frequently during child routines, especially snack. Beatrice also used language teaching during a couple of play activities. Most of these language-teaching interactions involved Beatrice teaching Diana words in Spanish and English. She also taught Diana the labels or names for things in her immediate environment. Sometimes she would rephrase what Diana had just said as a way of correcting it. The following interaction took place while Beatrice had gotten down a large coloring book which they both colored in at the kitchen table.

*M: (She points to her eyebrow then holds up a crayon.) ¿Qué color ese?*

*C: (She touches her eye.) Negros, aquí.*

*M: (She chuckles) ¿Si, pero como se llama?*

*C: I uh know.*

*M: (She points to her eye brow.) ¿Cómo se llama estás?*

*C: ¿Se hacen así? (She blinks)*

*M: (She nods) ¿Cómo se llama?*

*C: Las cierran y las abran.*

*M: Mmhmm (She nods) Como se llama?*

*C: (She blinks her eyes) Que la soy mío, eso xx.*

*M: Mmhmm. ¿Cómo se llama?*

*C: Hmm, yo no sé, ummm... Que hacen (She opens and closes her eyes) así. (She touches the crayon to her face) Me voy pintar mi frente.*

*M: No. (She chuckles) En inglés se llama...*

*C: Uhh.. (She pinches her lips.)*

*M: En español, ojos.*

*C: ¡Ojos!*

*M: (She nods) Y en inglés?*

*C: Umm . . . eyes.*

(B-Observation Three)

*M: (She points to her eyebrow then holds up a crayon.) What color is this?*

*C: (She touches her eye.) Black, here.*

*M: (She chuckles) Yes but what is it called?*

*C: I uh know.*

*M: (She points to her eyebrow.) What are these called?*

*C: That do this? (She blinks)*

*M: (She nods) What is it called?*

*C: They open and close.*

M: Mmhmm (She nods) What is it called?

C: (She blinks her eyes.) The one that is mine xx.

M: Mmhmm. What is it called?

C: Hmm, yo no sé, ummm . . . They (She opens and closes her eyes) like that. (She touches the crayon to her face) I am going to color my forehead.

M: No. (She chuckles) In English they are called...

C: Uhh. (She pinches her lips.)

M: In Spanish, ojos.

C: Ojos!

M: (She nods) And in English?

C: Umm . . . eyes.

(B-Observation Three)

Language interactions like the one described above usually involved Diana's active participation. She pointed, touched body parts, and sometimes Beatrice asked her to move a certain way. For example, in one interaction Beatrice asked, "What does the monkey do?" Diana responded by scratching her side. Beatrice explained that she frequently engages in language teaching activities like the one above where she labels items. When she explained her method of language teaching, she described how she sometimes gives definitions for words, explaining then in Spanish. Beatrice explained that she often tells Diana the reason items are called what they are and why similar items, such as a mug and a glass, are different. The observed language teaching was in Spanish, except when Beatrice was teaching single words in one language and their equivalents in

the other. She explained that when she introduces new words she often teaches them in Spanish and English.

In addition to the more frequent language teaching and conversational interactions, Beatrice also engaged in literacy teaching interactions during the observations. These interactions happened during each of the last two observations, and during the short observation before the last interview. Literacy teaching interactions happened most frequently during play activities, especially during the session where Diana was coloring with her mom. The literacy teaching focus was often on letter names, sounds, and handwriting. One particularly interesting interaction occurred when Beatrice taught the Spanish vowel sounds to Diana, los vocales. She instructed Diana by first writing each vowel on a piece of blank paper. She then said each vowel sound while pointing to it, and then gave the name of an object that began with each sound. She would then prompt Diana to repeat the sound and the name for the picture. This activity evolved into a singsong call and response game that both Diana and Beatrice seemed to enjoy. Again, Diana was expected to and did actively participate in the activity. During this and another literacy teaching activity where she helped Diana practice the English letter names that correspond to written letters, Beatrice used many techniques one might expect a teacher to use in the same situation. For example, after she had named the letter or said the vowel sound and Diana had repeated it several times, she would point to the letter and wait for Diana to respond. If she responded correctly, Beatrice would praise or cheer for her. If Diana was incorrect, Beatrice would correct her gently and try again. Beatrice often used wait time rather than immediately giving Diana the answer if she hesitated.

Often Diana was able to identify the letter or sound given that time. While teaching Diana to write her name, Beatrice first asked Diana to try, then demonstrated the formation of the letters. She then wrote Diana's name and prompted Diana to write her name under that. As Diana attempted, Beatrice provided verbal prompts when needed such as, "Make a stick, and now a circle." She also provided hand over hand help at one point, guiding Diana's hand as she formed one of the letters. All of the artifacts Beatrice collected related to literacy teaching. She had Diana make her name with soft clay and with beans; she drew and had Diana trace the vowels and color pictures representing each sound, and she shared a reading workbook activity she did with her.

While conversational and language teaching were both observed and reported in the interviews as being numerous, only two print interactions was observed. Once Beatrice and Diana discussed the pictures on the inside cover of a storybook. During one observation, Beatrice used a cracker box on which pictures of faces made of crackers with different hair, expressions, and other characteristics. She used this time as a language teaching session, and she taught Diana the names for items on or near the faces. Beatrice explained during the interviews that she does read to Diana, but that this happens most frequently when she is reading a children's Bible to all of the children at once. She did explain that she does sometimes share other storybooks with Diana alone and that they talk about the events that happen in the books on these occasions. She described how she usually asks Diana a question about each page of the book. The active participation on Diana's part in these described activities was similar to that which was

observed. It seems that Beatrice engages in every kind of interaction with Diana.

Storybooks appeared to be kept on a shelf in the bedroom.

### **Influences**

While both interview and observational data illuminated the many characteristics of the emergent literacy interactions Beatrice and Diana share, the influences of these interactions were most evident in the interview data. These influences were primarily due to cultural factors. The most influential factor in Beatrice's current language and pre-literacy interactions with her daughter mentioned in the interviews by Beatrice were those related to her childhood experiences with her father. She shared her vivid memories of her father teaching her in the areas of literacy and math. As she described these she wept slightly, wishing out loud that her dad was not too far away to give him a hug. These experiences influenced her so much, she explained, that now she uses the same methods to help teach Diana literacy skills. She remembers how her father taught the Spanish vowel sounds, the alphabet, writing, and reading. She explained that the techniques she uses now come from him. She reports that her father also told many stories aloud and sometimes read to her from books from her school. While Beatrice's mother could not read or write, Beatrice explained that she was still influential on some of the interactions she has with Diana, especially language activities. She shared that the songs her mother sang to her and her younger siblings, are songs that she has sung to her own children. The song about The Coco that Beatrice sang during one of the observation sessions, she explained, was one she remembers hearing her mother sing to her younger siblings when they were babies. One way Beatrice explained that her mother was

influential of her conversational interactions with Diana was her mother's desire to bring up children who know how to behave. Beatrice remembers many conversations about behavior in social situations that her mother had with her, and Beatrice described having many of these types of conversations with her own children. Interestingly, when Beatrice was asked to share her thoughts about how children learn to communicate and how parents should help their children to communicate, her lengthy explanation related mostly to how parents should teach their children to communicate politely in social situations. It seems that in Beatrice's mind, communication and social skills are blended as one entity; they are one skill. Essentially, it seems that in her mind communication and pragmatics are one in the same, in spite of the fact that she was observed engaging in language teaching that concentrated on naming and labeling.

Another interesting factor related to Beatrice's culture is the fact that her parents spoke with her only in Nahuatl, an indigenous language in Mexico spoken by people of Aztec heritage. She understands it well and knows many words. She explained that she used it some with her oldest when he was about four, but did not use it with her younger children. The oldest did not really seem to understand or retain it, she said. She does not speak it to Diana, but Diana does sometimes hear it when she is speaking to her parents on the telephone. Beatrice's husband also speaks some Nahuatl at home.

Also a part of her culture is Beatrice's fluency in Spanish, and her choice to use Spanish in the home with her children, especially Diana. On the parent questionnaire, Beatrice indicated that Diana's mastery of Spanish and English are important to her but she explained in the interview that the majority of her interactions with Diana focus on

her Spanish language skills. Beatrice lamented frequently during the interviews the fact that her older children speak so much English in the home, and do not speak enough Spanish there. She also explained that she would like to improve her English skills. She said that she sometimes wonders whether she understands enough of what her older children are saying, and wishes she did not have to rely on them when she does not understand or know how to say an English word. At the same time, she explained that she wants Diana to be able to speak English well, especially because she just began attending a public prekindergarten program where the teachers and many students speak only English. This reality may be the motivation for Beatrice's efforts to teach Diana the letters of the alphabet in English, and the reason that Diana sometimes knows more school related vocabulary such as names for colors in English. Beatrice explained that she does not understand the notes the English-only speaking speech therapist sends home, but that she is comfortable communicating with the school staff if there is a problem, because there is a teacher in another room that can translate if her English skills are not sufficient. Another influential factor on the emergent literacy interactions that Beatrice has with Diana is the English language skill of Beatrice's older children. The older children play the role of interpreter, often supply words when Beatrice wants to explain vocabulary to Diana, and help when she herself wants to learn an English word.

In addition to the richness in the home environment due to language, the family's access to material resources seems to influence the emergent literacy interactions Beatrice and Diana have. Basic food and housing needs seem to be met. There seemed to be plenty of snacks for snack time, a prime context in which much language teaching



occurred. The home seemed well furnished, lit, decorated, and warm. There were pictures on the walls and plenty of furniture. The kitchen is equipped with a large kitchen table, the ideal place to color and practice writing. A relative even built for the family some beautiful red kitchen cabinets and tiled countertops reminiscent of what might be found in a Mexican kitchen. The family has a large TV with cable, a tablet computer, and Internet access via Beatrice's cell phone. The large Christmas tree and abundant decorations provided an interesting backdrop to both contextualized and decontextualized conversations on many topics during one observation. Beatrice indicated no lack of storybooks in the house to read, though she did say that some of the books in Spanish seem to be missing and that she had some difficulty finding ones in a local bookstore that were in Spanish and had enough pictures to hold Diana's interest.

The bookstore is the only community entity that Beatrice mentioned was influential of her current interactions with Diana. She mentioned that she had received home visiting services when her oldest son was born and she was just seventeen years old. She explained that a home visitor and a doctor would come to her home periodically. She indicated that these visitors instructed her on baby care, and that part of the information given was about the importance of talking to and reading to children. When asked if this program had influenced her thoughts about the importance of reading to and talking to children, she explained that she already had thought these practices were important before the visits began, due to what she had already learned from her parents.

While material resources seemed to be adequate, time is a resource that Beatrice describes as more scarce. She explained that she allocates this time carefully. Beatrice

said in the interviews that she works long hours most afternoons until late at night, during which time her husband is home with the children. This schedule means that on many afternoons when Diana is home from school, she is away at work. For this reason, Beatrice makes the most of Sundays and Friday afternoons when she is off. She seemed intent on using that time to work with Diana as much as possible, rather than allowing her to watch television as she admitted her husband sometimes does. While her work schedule sometimes interferes with her efforts to converse with and teach Diana, Beatrice's skill at teaching during those interactions seemed to ensure their effectiveness and Diana's participation. Diana was observed to be very cooperative and cheerful during these interactions, and she was seemed to experiences success during them.

In addition to Beatrice's talent for teaching that was evident during these interactions, she mentioned in the interviews that she really enjoys them. While she explained that she sees her role as that of an educator, she also indicated that she feels often like she is learning along with her daughter. She said she felt like a learner especially when English-based activities are involved.

While Beatrice said she sometimes feel like a learner, she felt that teaching her daughter was an act of love, a way of showing her she cares. She related that in the future she would like her children to be able to point to her efforts to teach them as a sign that their mother cared for them. Beatrice also explained she thinks communication skills go hand in hand with good behavior. Beatrice described some of the many conversations she has with her daughter and her other children when she advises them regarding proper social behavior. She emphasized respect and good manners. Beatrice explained that his

belief, one which her mother shared, is the root of the many conversations about behavior she has with her own children. She remarked, “*Mis papas me educaron que pues así que cuando yo tuviera mi bebe o mi niño mis hijos, yo les tenía que enseñar lo bueno y lo malo.*” [“My parents taught me like this, that when I have my baby or my child or my children, I have to teach them how to behave.”] (B-Interview One)

In addition to her beliefs about the value of respect and manners, Beatrice has ideas about reading. She mentioned she thought parents should use storybook sharing from infancy, so that children are accustomed to the activity, and understand the concept of reading and literacy. She also explained that parents should work on letter naming and vowel sounds with their children, and that this is what she does with Diana. Because the practices observed and the ones she explained are similar to those practiced by her father, perhaps her ideas about teaching reading are also similar to her father’s.

In addition to the Beatrice’s ideas and beliefs about emergent literacy interactions, Diana influences the language and literacy interactions in which she and Beatrice engage. Diana seems to enjoy them, for smiled and participated highly during every observed interaction. Beatrice did explain that sometimes Diana is not as cooperative as she was observed to be, but that she sometimes encourages her daughter with rewards or waits until later. Diana’s ability to communicate in Spanish also influences conversational interactions. She was only observed to have slight difficulty pronouncing some words, and it was clear that she and Beatrice had little difficulty communicating. Diana also enjoys, Beatrice reports, storybook sharing, and she is the one who usually requests story after story, until Beatrice has to explain she has household duties.

## Summary

Beatrice engages in conversational, language teaching, literacy teaching, and print interactions with Diana regularly. Conversational interactions are the most frequent, but language and literacy teaching interactions are also prominent. While storybook sharing of a whole book was not observed, Beatrice explained that this too is a part of their interactions. Conversational interactions are primarily about the here and now, but they also converse about good behavior, about their faith, and sometimes Beatrice tells stories about her childhood or she sings to the children. Language teaching interactions frequently relate to Spanish words and their English counterparts. These lessons occur most frequently during Diana's normal routine, and involve naming and describing objects. Literacy teaching involves attention to letter sounds, letter names, and writing. Special emphasis is placed on Spanish vowels, the letters in Diana's name. Literacy teaching occurs during play routines, and during special sessions. Print interactions frequently involve storybook sharing, and entail discussions about the pictures, as well as question and answer exchanges about the events in the stories.

The emergent literacy interactions Beatrice engages in with her daughter are highly influenced by those interactions that Beatrice had with her father and mother when she was a child. She uses many of her father's methods of reading and writing instruction, and engages in the singing and discussions about good behavior with her children that she remembers her mother engaging in with Beatrice and her siblings when she was young. In addition, Beatrice's childhood is the frequent subject of the oral stories she tells. Many of the beliefs about when and how to teach language and literacy

come from her experiences with her parents in Mexico, and these beliefs in turn influence the way Beatrice engages in emergent literacy interactions with her daughter. While hampered somewhat by a busy work schedule, Beatrice is committed to teaching her daughter, sees herself as an educator, and the act of teaching as an act of love. Beatrice's older children are a resource, especially in the world of English. Diana is most often a cheerful and willing participant who easily communicates with Beatrice in Spanish, in spite of occasional mispronunciations. The two have little difficulty communicating with one another, in spite of Diana's diagnosed language disability. Any lack there may be in material resources is not obvious, and there seem to be enough resources to use during the activities in which Beatrice and Diana happily engage when Beatrice is not working. All forms of emergent literacy seem to occur and are influenced heavily by cultural factors, as well as parent and child factors. These interactions often have a fun quality to them and involve active engagement by both Beatrice and her daughter.

### **Catarina and Juan**

Catarina and three-year-old Juan were observed during three sessions in mid to late November through December. Two interviews were held after the observations were completed. Catarina's two-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter were present during all of the observation and interview visits.

### **Interaction Characteristics**

The most frequent observed and discussed interaction type was conversation. Conversation happened during basic dramatic play, regular play, while watching TV, and during Juan's normal routines. Many directives were used, but Catarina also asked Juan

many open-ended questions. Yes-no questions were observed about as much as open-ended ones. Catarina frequently checked with Juan after he said something to make sure she understood him correctly. Catarina occasionally rephrased or repeated correctly what Juan had said incorrectly. Sometimes she expanded on what he said by adding a word or two to it. Most conversation focused on the here and now. During many of Juan's turns in conversations, he was very difficult to understand, but the conversations usually continued in spite of that fact. One especially long conversational interaction occurred during a teeth brushing session during the first observation. Most of Catarina's utterances at that time, while given gently, were used to keep Juan focused on actually brushing his teeth in hopes that they might emerge sooner from the bathroom. Sometimes conversational interactions related to simple, short dramatic play routines, as was the conversation below. (Words that were not understandable were transcribed with xx. Two question marks are used to indicate possible words said.)

*Juan has just jumped up in the middle of storybook sharing and run over to pick up a Lego helicopter, one of his favorite toys.*

*C: xx a vi, a vi, a vi xx xx. xx xx Nanu. xx xx Sheri?? Aji xx xx. (He sits the helicopter on the arm of the couch as he vocalizes, then lifts it up, spins its propeller and walks close to the kitchen.)*

*M: ¿Adónde te vas? Ven.*

*C: A xx xx.*

*M: Hugh?*

*C: A vi?? xx.*

*M: ¿Adonde?*

*C: A ver xx.*

*M: ¿A ver qué?*

*C: A vi xx!*

*M: ¿A ver taques?*

*C: ¡Tique!*

*M: ¡Oh! ¿A comprar tiques?*

*C: Ah hugh!*

*M: (She chuckles.)*

(C-Observation One)

[C: xx a vi, a vi, a vi xx xx. xx xx Nanu. xx xx Sheri?? Aji xx xx. (He sits the helicopter on the arm of the couch as he vocalizes, then lifts it up, spins its propeller and walks close to the kitchen.)

M: Where are you going? Come back.

C: A xx xx.

M: Hugh?

C: To see xx.

M: Where?

C: To see xx.

M: To see what?

C: To see xx!

M: To see taques? (cylinders)

C: Ticket!

M: Oh! To buy tickets?

C: Ah hugh!

M: (Chuckles.)]

(C-Observation One)

More here and now conversational interactions were observed in sessions and described during interviews than decontextualized conversations. Catarina explained that she and Juan frequently converse if they are alone driving in the car together about construction machines, police, firemen, and ambulances. She explained that recently upon seeing a bulldozer, Juan shared that he wanted to be someone who operates a one when he grows up. Catarina explained in the interviews that she and Juan are always talking.

In addition to conversational interactions, Catarina and Juan were observed engaging in print interactions. Storybook sharing was the only print interaction type that was observed across all observation sessions. During storybook sharing, Catarina asked questions about what was in the pictures, and identified pictures for him. During the observation sessions, she tried to read to Juan word for word from the storybooks, but sometimes he would suddenly pop up in the middle, or take the book and try to tell the story to Catarina. This “reading,” explained Catarina, can be hard for her to understand, but she said she is happy that he is showing an interest in reading. As indicated in the observational data, Catarina explained in the interviews that it can be hard for Juan to sit for an entire story, even though he does ask her to read them, and that he does better when they are alone together.



In addition to conversational interactions and storybook sharing, Catarina and Juan engaged in some language teaching interactions, though language teaching was not mentioned during the interviews. Sometimes during the sessions, Catarina worked to help Juan understand words and teach him new ones. Occasionally she tried to help him pronounce words correctly. This language teaching was most often observed during other interactions such as storybook sharing or conversation. For example, sometimes during storybook sharing Catarina repeated what Juan had just said, and added a little more to it. Other times, she rephrased or said correctly what Juan had said incorrectly. She did not however teach him words by saying them and telling Juan to repeat them. During one TV show, she emphasized words and said a new word in a casual but deliberate way. As she did this, she slowed down her speech slightly and sometimes waited to allow Juan to make an attempt at saying a word or at answering a question. The following interaction which occurred while they were sharing a book about fish, a Christmas gift from Juan's school, was typical of the language teaching that was observed.

*C: He turns the page and gasps at the picture.) ¡Oh yeah una tímido!*

*M: (Laughs)*

*C: ¡Este tibi-di- um-eh este!*

*M: ¡El tiburón! (She laughs)*

*C: ¡El tiburón! (He uses his hand as if to bite her on the neck.) Hmm hmm, xx xx es xx tibidon.*

*M: Tiburón. ¿Cuántos tiburones hay?*

*C: (He looks at his fingers and puts one out to the side in front of him) Uno.*

*M: ¡Dos!*

(C-Observation Three)

[C: (He turns the page and gasps at the picture.) Oh yeah a tímido (shy)! (He is trying to say the word for shark, tiburón.)

M: (Laughs)

C: This is a tibi-di- um-eh, this!

M: A shark! (laughs)

C: A shark! (He uses his hand as if to bite Catarina on the neck.) Hmm hmm, xx xx is xx tibidon. (shark)

M: Shark. How many sharks are there?

C: (He looks at his fingers and puts one out to the side in front of him) One.

M: Two!]

(C-Observation Three)

Most language teaching interaction did not involve any exchanges that were obviously instructional in nature, but rather the teaching was indirect. During one session, for example, Catarina talked as Juan made circles on a lined page of the coloring book. She described what he was doing as he did it. “You’re making circles, another, and another, and other one, and all done!” While she was doing this as a verbal/conversational interaction, it had the potential to teach the name for a shape, and help Juan with the pronunciation of the word. A similar interaction happened while they were all watching a Spanish language children’s TV cartoon. One of the characters had blown a large bubble with his bubble gum. This interaction, while still conversational

and relating to the program, incorporated an element of language teaching. In the following portion of the conversation, Catarina not only supported Juan in naming the objects and their color, but also described the action of the object, thus teaching a new vocabulary word.

*M: Chicle . . . goma de mascar. ¿Qué color es la goma de mascar?*

*C: Red*

*M: Si. Oooo Mira, el también. Oooh! ¿Qué es eso?*

*C: ¡Globos!*

*M: ¡Que globos! Ooooh!*

*(Laughter...)*

*M: Oh se xx. !Oh, floto!*

*(C-Observation One)*

[M: Gum . . . chewing gum. What color is the chewing gum?

C: Red

M: Yes. Oooh! Look, him too. Oooh! What is that?

C: Bubbles!

M: What bubbles! Ooooh!

*(Laughter . . .)*

M: Oh it xx. Oh, it floated!]

*(C-Observation One)*

Unlike the other interactions that were either observed, described, or both, literacy teaching was not observed often or discussed in the interviews. During the last observation session, she did attempt to teach Juan how to connect the dots in a coloring book picture, but Juan did not respond by making an attempt. In the same observation session, during the coloring book interaction described previously, Catarina had tried to initiate name-writing practice but abandoned the attempt when Juan did not respond to it. Catarina did explain later that she had just started teaching Juan to write his name. She did not expand on how she was doing this.

### **Influences**

As the observation and interview data helped to illuminate the characteristics of the emergent literacy interactions in which Catalina and Juan engage, this data also alluded to or explained some of the parent, child, and cultural factors that influenced these interactions. Parent education, siblings, Juan's school, Juan's interests and abilities, socio-cultural environmental factors, and Catarina's ideas about Latino culture seemed influential on Catarina and Juan's interactions.

The socio-cultural environment of the home included both an older and a younger sibling in addition to Juan. Catarina usually included one or both of the siblings in her emergent literacy interactions with Juan. Sometimes this worked, and other times it did not. Once her younger son interrupted a storybook sharing interaction as soon as it began because he wanted to keep holding the book he had selected for Catarina to read to them both. He began crying and was not satisfied by a substitute book she offered him. He then started eating Juan's snack and Catarina had to interrupt the interaction again to give

him his own. When they came back to the story, his little brother drowned out Catarina as she was trying to read with his own comments. Of course, this storybook sharing interaction was short lived. Juan's sister was also observed to be influential in some interactions. In addition to being a participant in some of them, sometimes Catarina's older daughter takes on a caregiving role. Catarina's daughter once indicated that she interacts with Juan daily, and often is in charge of getting him ready for bed. When Catarina was asked about how the siblings influence the interactions she has with Juan, she indicated that they are often involved in them, but she did not say that they interfered with them. On one occasion, she explained that Juan is more likely to converse longer with her if he is alone in the car as they are driving. She also explained that the more likely to listen to her share a storybook if they are alone at home together.

In addition to the presence of siblings as participants in interactions Catarina has with Juan, other culture-related factors were observed to influence the emergent literacy interactions that take place. The home environment is mostly neat and uncluttered. The apartment is well furnished, decorated, warm, and well lit. While there is no Wifi, Catarina has Internet access on her phone. There is a large TV with cable, on which the children are able to watch educational children's programs. The TV was not left on in the background often. Another resource that was present and easily accessible to the children was children's storybooks. Catarina explained that in addition to the toy box in the corner of the room, the children could find books in a cabinet in their bedroom. There were many age appropriate toys accessible and related to Juan's interests. All of these

resources served well in stimulating the various language and literacy interactions in which Catarina and Juan engaged.

While socio-cultural factors related to family resources affected interactions, child factors were also influential. The most common influential child factor was Juan's difficulty with verbal communication. Many of his words were missing sounds, especially beginning and ending sounds. Because of this communication difficulty, Catarina often checked or tried to clarify whether she had heard correctly what he had said. In spite of Juan's difficulty, during the observations Catarina would often seem to understand Juan's comments. For his part, Juan was a persistent communicator. He talked often with his mother during observations. He kept trying until he was understood. Another child factor that influenced interactions between Catarina and Juan was his tendency to stay involved in one activity for a few minutes before moving on to another, often stopping in the middle. Sometimes interactions observed were very short because of this tendency. For example, a couple of times in the middle of story sharing he hopped up abruptly. Catarina also discussed this tendency during the interviews. Another child factor described by Catarina is Juan's desire to have some control over interactions. Catarina explained that Juan is more likely to cooperate with storybook sharing if he is the one to initiate it. This dynamic also seemed to be at play when Juan would take the storybook Catarina was reading to him and read it to her instead. Another related behavior Catarina discussed that was evident in some interactions was that Juan does not often comply when being asked to repeat words or answer questions outside of a play routine, as sometimes occurs in a testing situation.

The cultural factors that were evident in the observations seemed more obvious as influential of current interactions than cultural factors that were part of Catarina's childhood. These childhood factors may have still influenced Catarina's current interactions with Juan in subtle ways. When asked about the emergent literacy interactions that she remembered having with her parents when she was young, Catarina explained that her parents were advanced in age, and she was the youngest child. She said that she does not remember either of them singing to her, and does not remember them reading to her until she was in preschool. She explained that they were extremely busy people. She said that she does not remember having many conversations with her parents, and that she primarily remembers them telling her to do her homework. She shared that she does remember them teaching her the vowel sounds however, when she was around five-years-old. She explained that her parents wrote the letters, said them, and had her repeat them back aloud. Perhaps the fact that her parents taught the vowel sounds when she was older than Juan may prompt her to wait until Juan is older before teaching him, but this plan was not mentioned during the interviews. It seems from the observations that she and Juan already have more conversations than she remembers having with her own parents. Her entrance into a prekindergarten (preschool) program could have been what inspired her parents to teach her the vowel sounds. Therefore, perhaps Juan's prekindergarten entrance spurred her recent work with him on writing his name.

Perhaps the recent efforts Catarina has made with Juan in helping him learn to write his name were spurred by Juan's entrance into prekindergarten. During interviews,

Catarina shared ideas about teaching, reading and language development as well as some of her parent education experiences. These ideas and experiences seem to be influential in the formation of ideas that went on to influence her interactions with Juan. After Juan was diagnosed with a speech and language disability when he was a toddler, he began receiving in-home speech and language therapy. In spite of the fact that she already had a daughter, Catarina remarked that before these services began she had little idea about the importance of talking with Juan, reading to him, or providing him opportunities to make requests. She explained,

*. . . hasta que nació mi- mi otro hijo (Juan) que fue cuando yo empezó aprender a que les tengo que leer, a pronunciar, o cosas así.*

*Pues la necesidad de (Juan), de que no puede hablar, cuando el empezó a tomar terapia por primera vez, fue cuando yo empecé también a ver que necesitaba leerle o contarle así hablarle.*

(C-Interview One)

[. . . once my other child (Juan) was born I began to learn that one has to read (to them), pronounce words, or things like that.]

[Well, (Juan's) need, due to the fact that he could not talk, when he began therapy for the first time, was when I began to see that I needed to read to him, or tell him things and talk to him and such.]

(C-Interview One)

She described how one therapist explained that rather than just giving Juan something such as an apple when he pointed at it, she should say “apple” to teach him the word so he could learn how to request it using words. Catarina also began receiving home visits from the same organization from which Angela had received them. She explained



in the second interview that the home visitor gave them many of the storybooks they have now. These services seem to have been valuable parent education experiences for Catarina that motivated her to talk and read more with Juan.

Catarina explained that now she thinks that it important that parents talk to their children all the time and read to them starting when they are babies. She said that repeating words to children helps them learn them. This idea seems to have influenced her present practices. In one observation session, she described the ongoing action of the cartoon characters the children were watching on TV, emphasizing some words. In another, she described the way Juan was making circles across lines in a large coloring book. It seems that as Juan's language skills have improved beyond making simple requests, her strategies have evolved in correspondence to that growth. It is interesting to note that during the observations she never used the strategy of saying a word and having Juan repeat it. Perhaps this practice is the result of the parent education she has received. In fact, her strategy of introducing words seems to match the instructions she indicated Juan's first speech therapist gave her.

Catarina's thoughts on reading development and education seem also to have been influenced by her parent education experiences. She explained that she thinks children learn to read and start wanting to read if they are read to from an early age, making reading a part of a child's routine. She said she thinks that it is important to talk about the pictures and to read the same books over and over again. She explained that she thinks this way a child will remember the story, and noted that this is beginning to happen with Juan. She explained that the Head Start Juan attends requires parents to

keep and submit a reading log documenting twenty minutes of storybook sharing four days a week. Catarina explained that since attending Head Start, Juan has been more willing share storybooks with her. Still, she explained that sometimes she feels stressed because she wants the children to cooperate with storybook sharing and related activities and sometimes they do not want to do so. She reported that sometimes she worries if she is doing enough and reported it can be stressful when the children do not cooperate.

Another idea that Catarina was determined to share with me is her impression that Latino cultural practices usually involve much less conversation with and reading to children than that common in American culture. She explained that she thinks that there is more of a tendency in Latino culture to scold or reprimand children, as opposed to conversing and reading with them. She recounted how she notices these differences when she goes out to buy groceries. She said that she sees the American parents talking to their children about what they are doing and what they are buying, but that she does not see the Latino parents doing that. Instead, she explained, they are in a hurry because they have to go pick up other children or because they are late for work. She explained that these cultural differences were one reason why she did not know about the importance of talking with and reading to children before her son began receiving therapy. Time pressure is another factor that Catarina mentioned as being influential of her interactions with Juan. She explained that time pressure influenced her choice to send Juan to Head Start rather than participating with him in a nearby church program that offers parent education and a morning preschool program. She explained that she

could not spare the time to fulfill the program's requirement of volunteer hours. It is also likely that she was referred to Head Start by her home visitor.

Aside from Catarina's ideas about language and literacy development, the most influential parent factor was mom's cheerful relaxed attitude during interactions with Juan. While in the interviews she did reveal that she sometimes feels stressed, she was observed to be quite patient with Juan's attention span, and often simply followed his lead when he abruptly moved from one activity to the other. Catarina explained that others had expressed their admiration of her ability to stay calm, even when her children's behavior seems frantic.

The influence of parent, child, and cultural factors were evident in the observational and interview data taken. A commitment to continued efforts to support Juan's language and literacy development was evident in the observational data, and discussed in the interview data.

### **Summary**

Catarina engages in conversational, language teaching, and print interactions with Juan regularly. Conversational interactions are the most frequent interaction among these, but language teaching also occurs. While literacy teaching was not observed, Catarina explained that she has begun teaching Juan to write his name. Conversational interactions are primarily about the here and now, and are common during play, normal routines, and media use. Language teaching interactions are often embedded in conversational or storybook sharing interactions, and involve Catarina either narrating ongoing action, or naming or describing objects without requiring Juan to repeat words.

These interactions are usually short. Print interactions involve storybook sharing, which includes labeling and discussion about the pictured events. At this point, Juan seems more interested in pretending to read the stories themselves, rather than listening to Catarina read word for word.

The emergent literacy interactions Catarina engages in with her son are highly influenced by what she learned from her son's first speech therapist, her participation in home visiting, and Juan's Head Start program. Catarina uses the time when she is off work to talk to and read to Juan, interactions in which Juan's younger brother, and sometimes his older sister participate and sometimes influence. Catarina remembers a time when she did not understand the importance of parents talking with and reading to their children, and feels that many Latino parents simply find the idea of doing so unfamiliar. Catarina's emergent literacy interactions are also highly influenced by Juan's difficulty talking, his tendency to stay with one activity a short time, and the fact that he is persistent in his efforts to communicate. Catarina's commitment to support Juan's language and literacy development, and her extreme patience throughout these efforts, are also highly influential of their interactions.

### **Dona and Carolina**

Dona and five-year-old Carolina were observed over five observation sessions. These observations took place from mid-December to mid-January. Two interviews were conducted between the fourth and fifth observation sessions. During most of the observation and interview sessions, several other adult extended family members, young friends, and a younger cousin were present. Most interactions took place in the large

open living room-kitchen area or in Dona's bedroom. These visits occurred in the late afternoon or early evenings. Observations, interviews, and the small collection of examples of language and literacy activities were sources of insight into the characteristics of Dona and Carolina's emergent literacy interactions.

During the observations, the most frequent interaction type was that of conversation. Usually these conversations occurred during the context of Carolina's normal routine. The use of many directives was observed, and misbehavior was discussed right when it occurred. Dona explained that she feels it is important to address any behavior issues quickly. Dona often warned Carolina that she would be sent to her room, and would occasionally warn Carolina that her door would be locked. Most conversation referred to the here and now. Both open and closed-ended questions were used, with more closed than open-ended questions. More decontextualized conversation, especially about the mother's childhood was reported in the interviews than was observed. Dona reported that the primary purpose of these discussions was to encourage good behavior and to help Carolina appreciate things she has that Dona did not have as a child. In the following quotation, Dona explained her reasoning:

I make her see that she's not always gonna get everything she sees or she wants, because I cannot afford it and that whatever she receives she has to take it with love. Because like most of the time, she'll want something very expensive and I'm like, I make her see it. I'm like, "You know what if I buy you this, its gonna cost me this much money and with that money I can actually go buy you something else, something more cheaper, something that prolly later on you just gonna end up using and then you be like, 'ok I don't want it anymore.'" You know, I make her see all those point of views that I have and then she'll be like, "ok" You know?

During observations, Dona was involved in many activities, and Carolina often tried to start a verbal interaction while Dona was doing them. On a few occasions, Dona was using her computer or mobile phone. Conversational interactions occurred in both Spanish and English. Consistent patterns in English versus Spanish use during these interactions were not obvious. While Dona explained that she uses English when she is very angry and cannot seem to get Carolina to understand why her behavior is wrong, the opposite tendency was observed. Sometimes when Dona spoke in Spanish, Carolina would answer back in English, but she seemed most likely to respond in Spanish during the end of her and Dona's participation in the study. In the following conversation Dona and Carolina had while watching *Pinocchio* in Spanish, the language mixing or code switching below, the corrections and rephrasing/recasting used, and the conversation length were typical of many of the conversational interactions observed that were not centered on behavior.

*C: (She looks at the TV and comments.) No tiene miedo [He is not afraid.]*

*M: Mmhmm*

*C: The donkeys*

*M: No, sea gulls*

*C: The other one's a donkey. See, that's a donkey.*

*C: Mire atunes! [Look, tunas] Oh my gosh! Mire he... El gato es Figalo [Look, he ... The cat is Figalo.]*

*M: Figaro*

*C: I know him. It's Figaro.*

In most conversational interactions, Carolina and Dona seemed to understand each other, in spite of Carolina's diagnosed language disability. Occasionally Carolina would mispronounce a word or mis-name an object.

In addition to conversational interactions, Language teaching was observed. In these instances, Dona gave the names and definitions for new words, or corrected Carolina when she used incorrect words to identify objects. Dona also sometimes helped her pronounce a word. English was sometimes used in these instances. Dona reported many more instances of language teaching than those which were observed. Dona said that she often tries to help Carolina make a connection between new words in Spanish, and words she knows in English. Dona explained that she tries to use Spanish as frequently as possible so she gets better in that language. She reported in one interview that this strategy was working, as Carolina was following directions in Spanish. By the time of the last meeting with Dona, she explained that she was trying to speak mostly in Spanish to Carolina. Carolina seemed to verbally respond in Spanish more at that time than had been previously observed. Dona explained that she had begun speaking mostly in Spanish with Carolina to improve her daughter's Spanish skills. In this way, she seemed to be using conversation in Spanish as a way to teach Carolina better Spanish language skills.

Storybook sharing was the only print interaction type that was observed, occurring during the last two observation visits. During most of the observed storybook sharing, Dona referenced the print, often tapping just above each word with her thumb as she read. Dona did prompt Carolina to pay attention to the storybook several times. Dona

most often read word for word, but sometimes paused to ask questions, answer Carolina's questions, or describe or identify a picture. Dona also sometimes embedded language teaching within storybook sharing, such as in the interaction below when Dona was reading the storybook, "Love You Forever" to Carolina.

M: What's another word for "Leap"?

C: Uh . . .

M: What's she doin'? (She points to the character in the picture.)

C: Jumping up high.

M: Ugh hugh!

(D-Observation Five)

Two characteristics observed during Dona's oral reading during storybook sharing were unexpected. Sometimes when Dona read aloud, her reading seemed less than fluent. Other times, even while reading a frequently shared storybook, she sometimes read words that differed grammatically from those on the page.

Dona reported that she reads Carolina at least two books nightly, often reading English books and at least one Spanish book. She explained that she allows Carolina to choose the books and that she reads her favorite "Love you Forever" nightly. Dona also explained that she sometimes reads chapter books to Carolina, which she shows she understands by asking questions that Dona answers. Dona reported that she reads several pages a night of a chapter book. She sometimes asks her to make predictions during reading of chapter books, sometimes referring to pictures. She explained that she



sometimes talks about things Carolina has experienced that relate to the action in the story. Dona also explained that she sometimes pulls out a book of her own and begins reading it to provide Carolina a model to copy. She said that Carolina will then occasionally get her own book out and, “She’ll be looking at the pictures and trying to make up a story.” Storybooks are kept on a bedroom shelf.

In addition to print interactions in the form of storybook sharing, literacy teaching interactions took place. One literacy teaching interaction occurred when Carolina chose an alphabet puzzle from her room. Letter names were emphasized, though letter sounds were the larger element of focus. This interaction occurred in English, except during an embedded conversation about hairs found on the puzzle board that occurred in Spanish. While it was not observed, Dona reported engaging in literacy teaching five times a week as part of Carolina’s homework. She explained that she must sit with Carolina in order for her to do her work. Dona reported she “lays off” of teaching interactions outside of homework on weekends because the school assigns so much homework. If there is no homework given, such as when there is a school vacation, she explained that she uses workbooks with Carolina. These workbooks have word problems with pictures, and activities on letters, numbers, and story sequencing.

The artifacts Dona collected as examples of language and literacy activities she and Carolina have done together all related to Carolina’s school activities in some way. One example was a collage of a Venn diagram that illustrated healthy versus unhealthy foods, which they had discussed when Carolina came home from school. Another example was a worksheet featuring work on writing the letter *r*, and completing words

using *r*. She explained which of the activities build language skills, and which built pre-reading skills.

### **Influences**

Parent, child, and cultural factors seemed to influence the emergent literacy interactions Dona and Carolina had together. Cultural factors were the most prevalent factors mentioned by Dona during the interviews, but all other factors were also discussed. Influential factors parent, child and cultural factors were also revealed in the observational data.

Various factors related to culture seemed to influence the emergent literacy interactions that take place between Dona and Carolina. Most of these related to influences present in Dona's adulthood, rather than those were present in her childhood. Cultural influences were evident in the home environment. During the observations the home was usually neat and organized, though sometimes there was evidence of ongoing drywall work or painting. The trailer was well furnished and warm. They had a tall and heavily decorated Christmas tree. Pictures of extended family members in graduation garb were posted on an entertainment center near the large TV. The TV was not often on in the background, though sometimes there was music playing, and the heater could sound loud when it cycled on. A cell phone with an external speaker was the primary music source. During some observation sessions, Dona used a laptop computer, and accessed Cumbia and other Latino popular music from the Internet on her mobile phone. Dona explained in one interview that she was glad she did not have cable TV, because if she did, she could see how easy it would be to get involved in her own programs and let

Carolina become involved with her shows. She said she understands how this access would interfere with their interaction with each other. During two observation sessions the family watched the Spanish language version of popular videos. In addition to access to media, there were plenty of toys, including those for dramatic play, and books were readily accessible and plentiful. These resources provided ample props for emergent literacy interactions and were observed to be used for this purpose on occasion.

Dona explained that a couple of community resources, the library and Carolina's school, are influential of her interactions with Carolina. Dona reported that she and Carolina regularly visit the library. Dona allows Carolina to choose books, and they both use the computer. She explained that they also check out videos, and it seems likely that the Spanish videos they watch together came from there. Dona explained that Carolina's prekindergarten assigns homework nightly. She said that these assignments involve practice with letters, writing, letter sounds, and sometimes numbers, but that she has some flexibility in deciding whether Carolina will do all or just some of them. She said that Carolina will not do the homework unless she sits with her at the table as she completes it. She also explained that once a week the school requires Carolina and Dona to read two books that Carolina chooses from school and brings home. Carolina is required to hand in a summary of the books. The school expects the summaries to be in Carolina's handwriting. Dona described how she reads the books to Dona; asks Carolina to tell her what the book was about; writes down her description as closely as possible; reads the description aloud; makes corrections that Carolina insists on; then lets Carolina copy the description onto lined paper for submission. Dona also explained that the events

of the school day are also a conversational topic each afternoon. Not only does the school influence conversational, print and literacy teaching interactions, it also influences language teaching interactions. Dona reports that the speech therapist Carolina sees at school also gives some homework, but that this is not specific enough for her. She described one assignment: "Work on the l, and the number 9." Dona mentioned that she does not find this lack of specificity helpful or appealing. She explains that sometimes she resents that she has to think of some activity to do that fits the assignment. Dona explained that she still really does not understand the specifics in reference to Carolina's diagnosis. She explained that she has even asked a relative about what the names for the various speech terms listed in the evaluation paperwork meant, and that person did not understand them either. She explained that she would like to understand the diagnosis more clearly.

In addition to community influences, the makeup of Dona's and Carolina's household seems to influence Dona and Carolina's interactions. During most observation and interview visits, there was frequently a couple or a threesome of adults and/or children interacting at one time with one another. Often those present were extended family members or friends of family members. Frequently, a middle-school age boy and a five-year-old boy who Dona helped care for also were present. It was typical to see Carolina playing with her little cousin, with the youngest child that Dona helped provide childcare for, or talking briefly with one of the other adults. Carolina's aunt read a story to Carolina during one observation. Interactions in which Carolina participated in or observed at home with these individuals were most often conducted in Spanish. Film and

music media were also in Spanish. Sometimes during observations, Dona interacted with the cousin instead of Carolina. Sometimes she included both of them in the interaction, such as when sharing storybooks. Dona explained, however, that she reserves bedtime storybook sharing as a special time reserved for just the two of them.

In addition to cultural characteristics in the household being influential, Dona mentioned some childhood language and literacy experiences that were somewhat influential of her current interactions with Carolina. When asked about the childhood memories of experiences she had that related to language and literacy, Dona recalled outings she took to the countryside with friends and relatives. She vividly described the setting, and explained that there was a lot of singing and telling of on these outings. She described later memories of being taught to read English in third grade after arriving in the U.S., and how she remembers that this instruction centered on the letter sounds. She did not relate any memories of storybook sharing or literacy teaching interactions between herself and her parents when she was younger, but indicated that she does remember how her mom sang songs to her that were playing on the radio. Dona reported that a very influential experience from her childhood on the language interactions she now engages in with Carolina is the fact that she helped raise a younger sibling. She described noticing that when her then mother-in-law spoke to the child using “baby talk,” he began speaking this way also. She explained that this experience led her to avoid using baby talk with her daughter. She noted that even now she makes sure to use a normal voice with Carolina, and explain things like behavior clearly to her. Dona also reported as influential, her experiences helping people learn how to speak and read

English. She noted that she explains words in a similar way to Carolina, as she does to these individuals.

Another recent experience that has influenced Dona was that of observing other parents from similar cultural background as her own. She explained she has noticed parents who do not help with homework or go on field trips, and that said that she thinks parent participation is important for children to do well and feel supported. Donna said, “. . . some Latinos have too much work, or too many children and not enough patience.” She explained that she is committed to continued involvement in Carolina’s school activities, and indicated that she has gone on field trips.

In addition to cultural factors, child factors were observed to affect some of the interactions in which Dona and Carolina engaged. The most obvious influential child factor during observations related to Carolina’s behavior and Dona’s response to it. Tension around behavioral issues was most influential of conversational interactions. When Carolina did not follow Dona’s directions or comply when given a consequence for misbehavior, Carolina was often reticent and Dona very persistent in her verbal efforts to ensure that compliance. Carolina was sent to her room or this action was threatened at least once during each of the five observation sessions. Later Dona explained that she also sometimes tries to help Carolina calm down while breathing slowly when upset and to talk about her feelings. Another child behavioral factor that was observed to influence interactions was a slight amount of distractibility on Carolina’s part, which resulted in Dona asking Carolina if she was paying attention during storybook sharing during each of the two occasions it was observed.

An additional child factor that influenced print interactions such as environmental print interaction and storybook sharing was Carolina's reported interest in print. Dona explained that she is also interested in the print on packaging. Dona reported that Carolina will often point to words on packages and ask Dona what they say. This attention to print was also observed during storybook sharing, an activity she seemed to really enjoy.

Another observed child factor that influenced language interactions was Carolina's facility with Spanish and English. While Carolina has difficulties in understanding and expressing herself in both languages according to speech/language assessments given and reviewed, these difficulties seem to interfere little with conversations or language teaching between Dona and Carolina. Dona reports that most of the time now, if she has not understood what Carolina has said, it is because Carolina is speaking in Spanish when Dona expected English. Dona reports that it is easier for her to understand Carolina's Spanish attempts than the English ones. She also explained during one interview that she sometimes finds Carolina's reticence interferes with teaching her new words in Spanish.

In addition to child factors, several parent factors seemed influential during observations of emergent literacy interactions between Dona and Carolina. Highly influential of conversational interactions was Dona's decision to use primarily English with Carolina when she was a baby, a decision she explains she made because Carolina was being cared for in an English only day care while Dona was finishing high school. Dona said Carolina seemed to understand her better in English even at home. Dona

explained that she began using more Spanish with Carolina a couple of years ago, but that relatives have spoken Spanish to her continuously. Dona reported on the parent questionnaire that she was concerned about Carolina's difficulty pronouncing the *rr* sound in Spanish and that unfamiliar listeners do not understand her when she speaks Spanish. Dona also explained that others do not understand Carolina's English. Dona indicated she feels it is very important that Carolina learn both English and Spanish. These concerns seem to have influenced Dona's desire and efforts to help her daughter with her language development.

Dona explained other ideas she has that influence her interactions with Carolina. She explained that she thinks teaching letter sounds is very important when teaching children how to read, and that she learned about this while in elementary school. She described her memory of the first teacher she had, "I remember her. On the first week I got here she would sit with me on a round table close to a window. While everybody was doing their work, she'll be teaching me, you know, how to make the sounds and tell me the letters and yeah, I remember all that." She explained that she takes a similar approach when teaching others to read English, and added that she thinks some whole word memorization is important too.

Another very influential parent factor on interactions was Dona's work and housekeeping schedule. Dona was often busy. Twice she left Carolina under the care of her sister during observation sessions so she could pick up her younger brothers and take them to another location. It was for this reason that extra visits were needed to accrue six hours of observational data. Dona works part-time cleaning houses, helps care for the



home, and assists in caring for her nephew, in addition to caring for Carolina. She also helps cook for the three adults who live with her, and helps care for the children of a friend. During the observation sessions, these other duties were completed instead of engaging with Carolina, rather than involving Carolina in them. On many occasions, Carolina tried to begin an interaction when Dona was busy with something else. When Dona was busy, often she did not respond to Carolina's efforts. Dona explained that she does make time for Carolina's afternoon homework sessions and nightly storybook sharing. Dona seemed relaxed and happy during the storybook sharing and literacy teaching interactions she was observed to have with Carolina. She reported that she enjoys these interactions because she knows they will help Carolina

### **Summary**

Dona primarily engages in conversational interactions with Carolina. Many of these interactions focus on behavior in the context of Carolina's normal routine. Daily decontextualized conversations about Carolina's school day also occur, and conversations about Dona's childhood happen frequently. Conversational interactions include many directives. Dona speaks frequently to Carolina in Spanish, in an effort to build her Spanish language skills. Dona also teaches Carolina new Spanish and English vocabulary, sometimes in the context of storybook sharing, by pointing out new words and discussing what they mean. Print interactions in the form of storybook sharing occur each night before bed, and Dona references print while reading word for word, in addition to responding to Carolina's questions or comments. Sometimes Dona reads Carolina a portion of a chapter book over multiple nights. Literacy teaching occurs at

least five afternoons a week and happens during homework sessions. Literacy teaching during play activities sometimes occurs but is not as frequent as homework sessions.

Dona also does homework with Carolina that the speech therapist sends home weekly, but she finds it taxing to come up with ideas for addressing the areas the speech therapist indicates need practice.

While the observation and interview data shed light on the emergent literacy interactions in which Carolina and Dona engage, it also illuminated some of the influences of these interactions. Dona and Carolina's interactions are heavily influenced by Carolina's behavior and Dona's response to it. Directives and discussions about correct behavior are spurred by this dynamic. Carolina's facility with both English and Spanish makes communication between Dona and Carolina in both languages possible. Dona's commitment to maintaining and building upon Carolina's language skills, especially Spanish, is also highly influential. Also influential are other factors related to culture. Living at home are several adults and a little cousin, in addition to Carolina and Dona, and there are many opportunities for interaction. The predominant language used in the home is Spanish, and Carolina frequently engages in interactions in Spanish with children and adults who visit or reside in the home, who are either extended family members or friends of family members. Carolina's school expectations for literacy homework and submission of book summaries are also influential on the emergent literacy interactions in which Dona and Carolina engage.

### **Elsa and Jose**

Elsa and four-year-old Jose were observed over three sessions during December. Two interviews were conducted shortly afterwards. During most of the observation sessions, Elsa's two-year-old daughter was also present. Most of the emergent literacy interactions took place in the living room or kitchen.

### **Interactions**

Conversational interactions were the most commonly observed interaction that Elsa and Jose engaged in together. Conversational interactions occurred during the normal routine. Some conversations also took place in the context of media use (videos on phone) and sometimes during play, as well as literacy teaching activities such as homework. These conversations were many turns long and frequent. Elsa explained that they, "... talk all of the time." Many directives were used. While directives were given in Spanish, most conversation between Elsa and Jose took place in English. When Elsa did ask Juan a question in Spanish, Juan usually answered back in English. Most conversation related to the here and now, but some observed conversations were about friends at school and activities there. Both open-and closed- ended questions were used at about the same proportions. On a couple of occasions, Elsa would clarify or check that she had heard correctly what Jose had just said to her. Though it was observed less often than giving behavioral directives, sometimes Elsa would describe or name actions or explain the reason for an event or action. This kind of exchange was evident in the two conversations below that occurred as Jose remarked on the pictures during storybook sharing.

C: Mommy, why that girl laughing? (He points to a girl in the picture.)

M: See, she's laughing. (Points to the laughing girl.)

C: Why that girl laugh?'

M: Cause she's ticklin' him. See?

C: Ah hugh. But why they make her laugh?

M: Because it's funny. If I tickle you (tickles C) you laugh right?

C: (He laughs and squirms.)

Later in the story Jose initiated another conversation:

C: (He points to one of the elephants in a picture who is mouthing another elephant's head) Mommy, what's that elephant doin' with his mouth?

M: He's snuggling.

C: Why he did that with his long teeth?

M: That's how they snuggle. See, they don't have arms like we do. (She points to the picture of the elephant, then up to the picture of the boy above it.) They snuggle with their trunks.

More decontextualized conversation, especially about behavior, was described in the interviews than was observed. Elsa explained that she frequently discusses rules for correct and socially acceptable behavior with Jose.

In addition to conversational interactions, literacy teaching was very common. This literacy teaching was most commonly observed during storybook sharing, but was also observed during special homework sessions. Literacy teaching observed during story sharing involved print referencing and word repetition. In these interactions, Elsa ran her finger below each word she read. She stopped after every three or four syllables and at the end of phrases, and waited as Jose repeated the words on each page she had

just read. As he did so, she ran her finger under the same words again. This procedure continued for the duration of the storybook during one session, and occurred again with the same book during the next session. Storybooks are kept in a toy box in the children's bedroom or out in the living room.

In addition to storybook sharing, literacy teaching also occurred during homework sessions. One homework session was observed that focused on letter identification and writing both letters and numbers. Elsa used print referencing throughout this activity, reading the instructions and having Juan repeat the directions after her as she referenced the print again. During the same homework session, she stopped Juan as he was hurriedly naming the alphabet letters on the sheet and she had him slow down as she pointed to each letter. During this session, Elsa also used teaching techniques such as repetition, verbal prompting, praise, encouragement, and refocusing of Jose's attention as he said and traced the letters of the alphabet. Elsa explained during the interviews that she engages in literacy teaching at least four times a week as part of Jose's assigned homework, which also involves his dictation of story summaries and copying over what Elsa had written. In addition, she explained that she also has a sister working in the field of early childhood education, who emails her attachments with worksheets. Elsa said that she goes to an office supply store in the area regularly, downloads the worksheets, prints them out, and brings them home so Jose can complete them during weekends or school breaks.

Elsa and Jose engaged in print interactions during the observation sessions, as well as conversational and literacy teaching interactions. These print interactions usually

included the print referencing with word-repetition interaction described above. Jose was usually actively engaged during storybook sharing. Elsa explained that though all of the storybook sharing observed had involved her use of the print-referencing and repetition technique, first she always reads a new book all the way through. She explained that by the time she starts using the technique she has read the book to Jose multiple times a day for several days. During this storybook sharing, she explained that she and Jose discuss the pictures and the events that occur. Discussions about the pictures were frequently observed. When he asked a question or made a comment, usually about objects pictured, Elsa would respond by answering his question, often with some kind of explanation or definition. There were a couple of decontextualized conversations about objects seen in the pictures that related to things Jose wanted or items that he had experiences with in the past.

Another literacy teaching interaction Elsa described involved doing activities at home that had been started elsewhere in the community. She explained that when she had reliable transportation, she visited two building supplies stores with the children regularly, and participated with them in small building projects. She would bring them home and either build or use them there. She explained that often the resulting interaction would involve reading directions aloud and following them, or discussing the events that occurred during session at the store.

In addition to conversation, literacy teaching, and print interactions, sometimes language teaching interactions also occurred. Language teaching was most often observed during media use but some also occurred during storybook sharing. The most

commonly observed form of language teaching was rephrasing/recasting where Elsa would say correctly what Juan had mispronounced. Sometimes Elsa would break the mispronounced word down into syllables and wait for Jose to repeat each part of it correctly after she said it. Subsequently, he would repeat the word correctly. The interaction example below occurred as she and Jose were watching a video over her mobile phone.

C: Which Pepe song we gonna hear?

M: No it's a episode

C: iso?

M: no, Ep

C: Ep

M: i

C: i

M: Sode

C: Sode

(They watched the video about blowing bubbles.)

(E-Observation One)

Sometimes Elsa explained the definition of a word, especially when Juan asked what it meant. During an interview, Elsa explained that Jose frequently asks what words mean, so she frequently defines words for him. She also explained that he asks a large variety of how and why questions which she usually answers.

Though Elsa did not intentionally make a collection of artifacts that illustrated interactions related to language and literacy, she did share a collection of photos of activities she thought were examples of the kinds of activities they do together that relate to those areas. She explained that the family had Thanksgiving dinner together at a friend's house where they went around the table and explained why they were thankful. She also described how she and the children went by bus to visit her mother in New York for Christmas and sang "The Wheels on the Bus," and conversed about whom they would see once they arrived. Elsa also shared a picture of the children posing with a kit they had all made together at a local Lowes building workshop and she shared chalk drawings that she had made with the children on the walkway outside their apartment. From this collection, as well as the observation and interview data, it seems that regular emergent literacy interactions take place and that some of the characteristics of these interactions are unique to this family.

### **Influences**

Parent, child, and cultural factors influence the emergent literacy interactions Elsa and Jose have. Cultural factors were the most prevalent factors noted during observation sessions and described during the interviews, but all factors above were observed or described to be influential at some point during the study.

Cultural factors related to Elsa's adulthood influenced the emergent literacy interactions she had with Jose. Among these adult cultural factors were those related to the qualities of the home environment and the resources in the community. While Elsa reports that they have a low income, they seem to have access to various socio-economic



resources, and these resources support the emergent literacy interactions that take place there. The apartment was neatly kept, uncluttered, and warm. The children shared a large bedroom filled with many toys and books, furnishings in the home were adequate though sparse. Elsa explained that the furnishings in the apartment were the only ones they could get out of their previous apartment before they were forced to leave. They had to leave many items behind because they were slightly short on the rent, and the TV was one of these items. Because the family had no TV at the time the observation took place, background noise from one was not a factor. With the move, they also lost Wifi, so Internet access during observations was via a mobile phone only. Several of the observed interactions between Elsa and Jose occurred while watching videos or listening to music over the phone. In the kitchen, the only table was a small one the children's father had made for them. Once, this table was moved into the living room for homework time. Often, the table was used in the kitchen during storybook sharing and for meal times, but the table was too small for the whole family to use at once.

In addition to the resources, Elsa and Jose were observed using while at home, Elsa explained that her use of community resources influences her interactions with Jose. The use of these community resources has been influenced by her access to transportation. She explained that when she had a car, she and the children could participate in free or low cost building activities at the local building supplies stores. Once home she and the children could complete, use, and discuss those activities together. She also described using email and printing facilities at a local office supply store to print the activities for Jose that her sister often sends electronically.

Elsa explained that the family has also visited a downtown children's museum, and has attended various holiday events at local churches. These events were likely topics of decontextualized conversations after returning home. Before Christmas Elsa was able to get a ride to a local church that gave her family food and Christmas gifts. These donations were the subject of a couple of the observed conversational interactions when they came back home that afternoon.

In addition to the stores and churches, Elsa also mentioned other community agencies that affect the socio-cultural factors in the household. One of these resources is Jose's public prekindergarten program, housed in a private downtown childcare center. Though now Elsa pays a neighbor to bring Jose to school rather than driving him herself, the expectations of the school for the completion of homework certainly influence the emergent literacy interactions that take place in the home. Literacy teaching is usually involved in the homework and storybook sharing. The school's expectations seem influential of the teaching role Elsa sometimes takes on when interacting with Jose. In addition, Elsa explains she and Jose frequently discuss events that occurred during the school day. While the particular school Jose attends has influenced some of the literacy teaching interactions, school culture in general seems to influence some of the other characteristics of Elsa's interactions with Jose. One example of this influence was evident in the characteristics of literacy teaching during homework time, and in one of the storybook sharing interactions. For both of these interactions, Elsa sat across from Jose while engaging in the interactions, as one might expect in a school setting. She seemed well practiced in the use of this position, making sure that Jose's worksheet

during homework time, and the book during storybook sharing, was positioned in such a way that they were right side up for Jose.

While some of the influential culture-related factors were present in the household and community, some of the cultural factors that seemed influential of Elsa and Jose's emergent literacy interactions related to Elsa's childhood. These factors related to childhood language and literacy experiences that Elsa described during the interviews.

Elsa mentioned that her mom was unable to read or converse with her much after they moved to the U.S. because she worked 16 hours a day and they did not move here with her father. She explained that she does remember both of her parents helping her with homework when she began prekindergarten while still living in the Dominican Republic. She explained that she has strong memories of how her parents taught her the vowel sounds, and how vowel sounds received more emphasis at that time than consonant sounds and letter names. Elsa, however, did not indicate that the work she does now with Jose relates primarily to vowel sounds. Another poignant memory she spoke of was one of the only conversations with her mother that she remembers clearly. That conversation, she explained, was the one in which her mother told her about Elsa's father's death. In reference to family literacy teaching interactions after her family's move to the U.S. when she was eight, Elsa explained that that it was her older brother that helped with reading related homework. She explained that her brother would come at midnight after work and wake her and a sibling up so that he could check their homework, in order make sure they were solid in their basic reading skills. This level of dedication to reading achievement seems to reveal itself in Elsa's efforts with Jose.

Another cultural factor present in Elsa's childhood that seems to influence her current emergent literacy interactions with her son was a particular kind of conversations Elsa remembers her mother having with her frequently as she was growing up. Elsa mentioned that she often talks to Jose about how to behave, because of the emphasis that her mom put on good behavior in these discussions. She remembers her mother explaining, "If I die tomorrow, if you don't behave, then who's gonna take care of you? Who's gonna want you? Nobody."

As well as cultural factors, various parent factors seemed to influence the emergent literacy interactions in which Elsa and Jose engage. One parent factor that influenced the emergent literacy interactions in which Elsa and Jose engage is Elsa's decision when Jose was a baby to speak mostly English. She explained that at the time she reasoned that this was the dominant language in the US, and it would serve Jose well to master it first. In most of the observations, it seemed as if Jose's English skills were much stronger than his Spanish skills. For that reason Elsa explained that she prefers to converse with Jose in English, though she had indicated on the parent questionnaire that she feels that mastery of both Spanish and English is important. She shared that she feels it is easier for him to understand conversations in English rather than Spanish. One interesting feature of Elsa's communication was the way in which she spoke English. While Elsa's English seemed fluent, during one of the observations she inquired about how to pronounce the word "ornaments." During some of the other observed conversations, it was unclear whether she was speaking in another dialect. Some of the ways she phrased her sentences seemed different from that which might be expected in a

fluent English speaker using what is often referred to as a Standard English dialect. In addition to Elsa's style of speaking, her affect was influential. While during most of the interactions she seemed happy and relaxed, during the homework interaction she told José that she had a headache. She kept telling him to hurry and finish, and she seemed like she may have felt stressed by factors unrelated to the homework. While she seemed on edge during the homework interaction, during most interactions she seemed relaxed and responsive. During the interviews she reported that she enjoys sharing storybooks and having conversations with Jose, as well as teaching him reading. She explained that she feels teaching is a big part of good mothering. When asked what parents should do to teach children pre-reading skills, she said that it is best for parents to read to their children starting at least six months of age, that moms should be the ones to teach their children reading, and that children learn to read by recognizing words in longer and longer sentences. These beliefs about reading seem to match the current print referencing and phrase repetition she was observed to use when engaging in the literacy teaching she did in the context of storybook sharing.

Like her ideas about reading, Elsa explained that her own interests influence which storybooks they share. She said that while the book *Loving* has become an enduring favorite she also really enjoys reading Clifford and Thomas books to Jose. She said that she likes the Clifford books because these were her favorites growing up, and because they teach about good social skills. She said that she likes the Thomas books because they teach Jose about feelings. It seems from this explanation that Elsa's goal of

storybook sharing with Jose goes beyond that of building his reading or language skills, and incorporates the building of his social skills.

Just as cultural and parent factors are influential, child factors also seem to influence Elsa and Jose's emergent literacy interactions. The most observed child factor that seemed to influence interactions was Jose's interest in conversation about nearly any topic. He reportedly asks many why and what questions. Elsa explained that Jose was very interested in storybook sharing. He seemed capable of sitting for long periods and he seemed to enjoy the homework worksheets. During every observed interaction, he was extremely cooperative. Not only did Jose seem very cooperative, his receptive language abilities seemed very strong. He seemed attentive and responsive whether Elsa was conversing in English or giving him directions in Spanish. He seemed to have little difficulty communicating with Elsa though he did this almost exclusively in English. While upon listening very carefully one could tell Jose was making subtle articulation errors in which he would substitute one consonant sound for another, this tendency did not seem to interfere at all with his communication with Elsa.

### **Summary**

Elsa and Jose engage in a wide variety of emergent literacy interactions. The most common interaction is conversational. Conversations most commonly occur during the daily routine, but are also likely to occur in the midst of storybook sharing or homework time. Elsa commonly gives directives, but also answers Jose's many questions. She also frequently defines words for him because he asks her to do so often. Literacy teaching is another frequently engaged in interaction. Literacy teaching occurs

during special homework sessions focusing on letter names and writing summaries of the plots of storybooks, as well as during storybook sharing. One prominent feature of storybook sharing is the way Elsa references print while reading aloud to Jose, pausing while referencing the print again and waiting for Jose to repeat what she has read. Storybook sharing, both while using the above technique and while reading word for word with pauses to discuss events in the book, occurs several times a day. Language teaching also occurs with regularity. Language teaching is often embedded within storybook sharing or media use and involves Elsa defining words or having him repeat mispronounced words correctly.

Cultural factors present in the home and community influence the characteristics of the interactions described above. Chief among these factors is the availability of toys and books in the home and the ability of Elsa to take Jose on outings in the community. Homework assignments given by Jose's school are also influential. Cultural factors arising from Elsa's childhood are also relevant. Elsa has frequent conversations with Jose about how to behave in social situations, and this practice is influenced by the many conversations of this type that Elsa's mother had with her. To some degree, the emphasis Elsa's family members put on reading instruction was also influential on her current efforts at literacy instruction with Jose. Additionally Elsa's decision to communicate mostly in English with Jose at present arose from her decision to do so when he was a baby. Another parent factor that influenced interactions is that Elsa equates love with teaching Jose language and literacy skills. She likes these interactions very much. Jose himself influences interactions due to his ability to understand and communicate with

Elsa, in spite of his mild articulation difficulties. Also influential are Jose's strong interest conversation, storybook sharing, and other literacy activities.

### **Francisca and Diego**

Francisca and three-year-old Diego were observed over three sessions from late December to mid-January. Two interviews were conducted shortly afterwards. During most of the observation sessions, Francisca's five-year-old daughter was also present. Most of the emergent literacy interactions took place in the living room or kitchen.

### **Interactions**

The most common emergent literacy interaction observed was conversational. These interactions occurred primarily in the context of Diego's normal routine or during play. Though Francisca asked few questions overall, more open-ended questions than closed-ended ones were used. These questions were usually instances where Francisca asked Diego what was wrong, what he wanted, what his name was, or tried to clarify what he had just said to her. Nearly every verbal exchange involved some kind of behavioral directive. Most conversational interactions focused on the here and now, except for some of the behavioral directives. The conversational interactions were usually short, as were the sentences and phrases Francisca used. One interesting feature of these directives was their somewhat threatening and decontextualized nature. Whenever Diego would wander or run out of Francisca's sight, she would get him to return by telling him that there was a snake or monkey creature where he went that would snatch him, "*Alli esta la culebra, ven. Te va a llevar.*" ["The snake is over there, come. He is going to snatch you."] (F-Observation Three). "*El chango!*" ["The monkey!"] (F-



Observation Two). During one interview, she explained that she also sometimes tells Diego that a dog will get him if he insists on going out to ride his bike when it is cold outside. During one observation, she had the following exchange with Diego after she had just given him a pack of chewing gum.

*M: La policía te va a llevar porque no pórtate bien.*

*C: ¡No, no!*

*M: Ellos te va a llevar las manos detrás. (She pretends to handcuff him.)*

*C: ¡No xx Mami!*

(F-Observation Three)

*M: The police are going to take you away because you do not behave.*

*C: No, no!*

*M: They are going to put your hands behind your back. (She pretends to handcuff him)*

*C: No xx Mommy!*

(F-Observation Three)

In spite of the unsettling nature of these directives and the other emotionally charged conversational interactions observed, others seemed more positive, as did the one below when Francisca was helping Diego play with a doll that makes music while he was sitting on her lap:

*C: (He holds the doll and the music stops.)*

*M: Puje le en la panzas, aquí.*

*C: ¿Aquí?*

*M: Aquí, donde hay la mariposa.*

*C: (He tries pushing harder and hugs the doll. He gets down suddenly, and goes towards sister's room.)*

*M: Ven! Ven!*

*C: (He returns.)*

*M: Ojo, di ojo. Busca la nariz, la boca*

*C: (He says nothing, makes an attempt to point, but then leaves again.)*

(F-Observation Three)

[*C: (He holds the doll and the music stops.)*

*M: Push it in the tummy, here.*

*C: Here?*

*M: Here, where the butterfly is.*

*C: (He tries pushing harder and hugs the doll. He gets down suddenly, and goes towards sister's room.)*

*M: Come back! Come back!*

*C: (He returns.)*

*M: Eye, say eye. Look for the nose, the mouth.*

*C: (He says nothing, makes an attempt to point, but then leaves again.)]*

(F-Observation Three)

An interesting form of conversational interaction that took place between Francisca and Diego was nonverbal turn taking more typical between parents and their pre-verbal children. Nonverbal turn taking was observed on two of the sessions, once

when Jose was showing Francisca toys in his dump truck, and once when the two took turns hitting each other with balls.

In addition to the conversational interactions observed, Francisca described how she, Jose, and his sister dance daily and sing to music featured on a friend's Mexican wedding video. Francisca also reported that they talk about the events in the video as it plays. Francisca explained that during daily exercise sessions, she often has to tell Diego to calm down but the interaction is enjoyable. She also noted that each day after school she asks Diego if he has hit anyone, and warns him of consequences if he does.

Another emergent literacy interaction in which Francisca engaged with Diego besides conversation is language teaching. This interaction occurred frequently during play or normal routines. Naming and labeling, and pronunciation and repetition were the primary observed forms of language teaching. This interaction often emphasized basic communication exchanges such how to answer with his name when asked, how to say the names for common objects or bodily functions, or how to say please as a way of making a request. Several times Francisca also prompted Diego to ask other people their names.

Besides conversational and language teaching interactions, print interaction involving a coloring book was observed. Though it was not clear if there were printed words on the page, this interaction did involve interactions related to the pictures. On this occasion, Francisca had Diego get the coloring book and crayons out of his book bag and color in it on the floor in front of her. She asked him the names for of a couple of the animals on the pages. He attempted to answer each of her questions, trying to give the names in Spanish, and she corrected him by naming them correctly. In this interaction,

language teaching around the printed pictures in a book with no words was similar to the interactions Francisca explained occur when there are printed words as well as pictures. She explained that on the occasions she shares that book with him, she asks him for the names of animals, and tells him if he does not know them. In this way, she seems to be engaging in language teaching during the storybook sharing. Literacy teaching was not observed, but Francisca did remark that sometimes she has said the Spanish vowel sounds aloud to Diego and had him repeat them.

### **Influences**

Various child, parent, and cultural factors, including socio-economic factors, seemed to influence the emergent literacy interactions that Francisca had with Diego. Some of these factors, though primarily evident in the interview data, were also revealed in the observational data.

One of the most prominent factors observed as influential on the emergent literacy interaction engaged in by Francisca and Diego was the extreme difficulty Diego had with verbal communication. Diego's utterances were primarily at the single word level, and sometimes he still grunted, whined, and pointed to communicate. It seems likely that this difficulty influences Francisca's efforts to teach him how to talk about his needing to and having gone to the bathroom, name common objects, tell others his name, and ask others their names. Francisca explained that he sometimes does not understand what she says to him, especially if she is trying to share a storybook with him. She said that others do not understand him at all.

Another child factor that influences interactions is Diego's behavior. Francisca explained that she makes the threats she does in the hopes of making him behave. Francisca said that the fact that the children have seen arrests on TV, and watched their father's arrest, influences the weight and frequency of these conversations. In this sense, Diego's fear motivates some of the conversations Francisca has with him.

In addition to Diego's fears, Francisca noted that Diego's interests also influence the interactions she has with him. She said that one of the reasons she dances with him daily to the wedding video is that he really enjoys it. She described his interest in singing the video's songs as well, and mentioned that he likes storybooks with animals in them. The emergent literacy interactions she described seem to fit these interests.

In addition to child factors, parent factors seemed to influence the interactions related to language and pre-literacy that take place between Francisca and Diego at home. In the interviews, Francisca described some of her ideas about language and reading development and teaching. She also described some of her feelings about emergent literacy interactions.

Francisca was able to indicate Diego's interests during the interview, and seemed to engage in activities with Diego to match those interests. She said that she likes to dance and talk to him. She also noted that she likes teaching him to talk better, and that she wants to help him. On the parent questionnaire, she indicated that she felt it was important for Diego to develop communication skills in both Spanish and English. During the observation, this desire was expressed when she seemed to embed some kind of language teaching into many of the interactions she had. Later, she explained that she

would like Diego to receive speech and language therapy in both languages as well, and she was somewhat disappointed with the fact that Diego's speech therapist speaks mostly English in therapy. She explained also that she has only a TV, not a computer, and that she does not let the children watch TV much because a doctor told her it was bad for their eyes.

Another influential parent factor that Francisca mentioned on several occasions was that she cannot read or write in either Spanish or English. She explained that because she cannot read, she usually talks about the pictures if she does any storybook sharing. In spite of not being literate, she described how she thinks children learn to read, and what she thinks is the best way to teach them. She said that the process should begin when children are about three, and that storybook sharing should be one way reading is taught. She explained that during storybook sharing, the reader should talk about what sounds the letters make in the words and help children remember the sounds by repeating them. She said that the vowel sounds should be emphasized. She also mentioned that letter names should be taught if the child does not already know them. She also indicated that she thought children should be taught to write their name. She noted that it is important for children to write their names at three because, "*Porque cuando tengan cinco, ya, ya.*" ["Because when they are five already (That's late already)."] When asked who she thought should teach children to read, she explained that she thought maybe the teacher's should do so. One idea about literacy development and teaching that seems to have already influenced her practices with Diego is the idea about teaching vowel sounds. She explained that she had begun doing this aloud already.

The emphasis on the vowel sounds relates to one of the childhood language and literacy interactions Francisca said she remembers. She described how her parents taught her the vowel sounds and the ABCs, though they could not read or write. She explained that they taught these orally to her by saying them and having her repeat them. In addition to the emphasis on the vowel sounds and ABC's common in the cultural environment present in her home when Francisca was a child, Francisca also described her parents telling Bible stories aloud when she was about nine, and frequently going to church where there was always lots of singing. Francisca did not mention that she currently tells Diego stories aloud, but perhaps the singing she does with Diego while dancing to the video is influenced by the singing when remembers as a child. Francisco did explain that the music in the wedding video is a special kind of Mexican music called Zapateado that also has its special dance. Thus, the conversational interaction that she engages in daily with Diego is influenced by Francisca's Mexican culture.

As some of the characteristics of Francisca and Diego's emergent literacy interactions are influenced by the culture in which Francisca participated as a child, various socio-cultural factors present in the home also seem to influence these interactions. One of the most prominent of these is her family's socio-economic status. Furnishings were adequate but very sparse. The apartment is neatly kept, yet it was often cold during observations, and lights are kept off as much as possible. Francisca is unemployed and does not have a car. Francisca explained that she would like to purchase more clothes, especially socks and books for the children. She also said that she kept the electric heat off or low to save money. There were toys for Diego to play with and

around which conversation, print, and language-teaching interactions were observed. It is unclear how more toys would influence these interactions, but Francisca indicated that Diego only had one book, given to him for Christmas by the school.

The book given him by the school was the one way that Francisca indicated the school had influenced the language and literacy interactions Francisca engages in with Diego. She explained that they do not send homework for him to do, and she does not expect that due to Diego's age. She explained that the speech therapist does not send any assignments or suggestions for practice home. Interestingly, she also did not mention that Diego's language skills or any other abilities had improved since beginning school several months ago. Though she had Diego enrolled in the nearby Head Start for migrant and seasonal workers over the summer, she did not mention any way that this had influenced her interactions with Diego, and she explained that she had not attended parent education classes recently at any agency. She mentioned that she cannot visit the local library because of the lack of a car, but also does not check out library books at Diego's school. She indicated at one point that she knows the Family Advocate at the Head Start, but did not indicate that she influenced her interactions with Diego in any particular way, though the advocate said that she spends a great deal of time and energy year-round trying to help the family.

The only community agency that Francisca mentioned as influential on interactions, especially conversation, was Social Services. She explained that the reason she has so many conversations with her children about the police taking them away is that she has received a visit from them in which they said she had hit the children. She



says that she remembers them telling her that if they were ever to find any bruises on the children, that the children could be taken and placed for adoption. She indicated that she tells the children that the police will take them and that they will be adopted by another family so that they will behave and not get taken away.

While it is true that Francisca's husband was arrested and is now in jail awaiting deportation, Francisca did not mention during the interviews whether the extra burden this has placed on her was influential. She did acknowledge that her situation is stressful. It was unclear to what extent this extra burden and the stress it entails influences the sometimes "edgy" or aggressive tone of some of the observed interactions such as hitting each other with a ball, or the gunplay that was also observed.

### **Summary**

Francisco and Diego engage in several types of emergent literacy interactions. The primary interactions are conversational, and usually take place during Diego's routine or play. The conversations are usually short and contain many directives, including threats. Sometimes nonverbal turn-taking interactions occur. Francisca also engages in language teaching interactions that are often embedded in conversations. Language teaching frequently emphasizes naming and sometimes describing objects, using the names of objects to make requests, telling others his name, asking the names of others, and letting her know when he has used the bathroom. When Francisca does engage in the occasional print interaction or storybook sharing with Diego, she tends to give him names for the pictures or ask him to name them.

These interactions seem to be influenced by various cultural, child, and parent factors. The family's past involvement with Social Services is a strong influence on the conversational interactions. Francisca often warns the children that they will be taken away and placed for adoption if they do not behave. It is possible, but not verified by Francisca, that some of the tension present during observations was a result of her husband's incarceration and the emotional and economic stress it has put on the family. Another influence on interactions is Francisca's enjoyment of Zapateado, a traditional Mexican dance and music, which she shares with the children in the form of a wedding daily. She likes dancing and singing with the children, as well as trying to teach Diego to communicate better. Additionally, Francisca's believes that reading instruction should begin around three, though she thinks perhaps a teacher should provide this instruction.

### **Within Case Summary**

Emergent literacy interactions within each dyad had a unique compilation of interactions and interaction characteristics. These interactions and their characteristics were influenced in different ways within each dyad by various factors. In addition to the conversational, language teaching, print-based and literacy teaching interaction types, characteristics and influences of interactions within each dyad, there are some common interactions, interaction characteristics, and interaction influences across and between dyads and dyad subgroups. Some of these similarities and differences may not be unexpected, but many of them are meaningful. The differences and similarities between dyads and dyad subgroups will be described and explored in detail in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **ACROSS CASE RESULTS**

This section will cover similarities and differences in emergent literacy interactions and the characteristics of those interactions across individual dyads, as well as differences between dyads and dyad sub-groups. In addition, similarities and differences in various influences across dyads will be presented. First, the similarities across cases will be discussed. For example, the characteristics of the emergent literacy interactions in some dyads were similar to that in other dyads, and some of the techniques or strategies dyads used were similar. After across case similarities are discussed, differences between dyads and dyad subgroups will be presented.

Specifically, any noted differences in the interactions or their characteristics between dyad subgroups based on education level, time living in the US, the severity of children's language disability, and bilingual versus Spanish only dyads will be presented.

#### **Across Case Commonalities**

While the within case results illuminated the emergent literacy interactions of each dyad in many interesting ways, across case results were also rich. Results created a picture of emergent literacy interactions, their characteristics, and their influences across the six dyads. Many commonalities emerged.

Some interactions were commonly observed, described, or both across all dyads. These interactions often occurred under similar contexts and had similar characteristics.

In addition to interaction commonalities across cases, there were several factors that seemed influential in every dyad. Below, commonalities of interaction characteristics across dyads will be presented followed by common influences across dyads.

### **Interactions across Cases**

All dyads engaged in conversational interactions. Conversational interactions were more common across all dyads, whether reported or observed. Conversations normally occurred within the context of each child's normal routine. Snack time was a popular context for conversations, though other times such as during play were common. All parents used many behavioral directives, usually in an effort to ensure proper social behavior and safety. All parents asked more closed-ended than open-ended questions. Parents most often used open-ended questions to ask their children the name an object or picture they saw, or what they wanted. Conversations about events and objects in the immediate environment were more common than conversations about a past, future, or an abstract event. Parents described more decontextualized conversation during interviews than was seen in observation sessions. Beatrice and Diana were observed talking about her fear of clowns, and indicated in the interviews that she often has conversations about her own childhood. Dona was not observed having many decontextualized conversations, but mentioned that she always talks about Carolina's school day with her, as did Elsa with Jose, and Beatrice with Diana.

All dyads engaged in at least one other form of conversational interaction such as code-switching, non-verbal turn taking, or singing. Angela and Nina engaged in non-verbal turn-taking with the stuffed animal and bubble-blowing. Francisca and Diego

threw a ball at each other and non-verbally interacted while looking at Diego's little cars. Dona and Carolina often engaged in code-switching in conversations. Once she was working on an alphabet puzzle with Carolina in English, but switched to Spanish when Carolina was startled by a hair she found on the puzzle. Elsa spoke English during Jose's homework session except when telling him to pay attention or hurry. Beatrice sang a song to Diana about *The Coco*, Francisca indicated she sang to Diego while dancing with him to the wedding video, and Angela and Beatrice mentioned singing songs from church to their children.

Among the interesting features of these conversational interactions was the presence of both Spanish and English across dyads, no matter which language was predominant. While most conversations in five dyads took place in Spanish, English words, often spoken by the child, became part of them. For example, when Francisca asked Diego to name a fruit on the table, he said, "Apple." Even in the one dyad where English was used frequently, Spanish words or phrases became part of the conversations though spoken by the mother. For example, Elsa gave directives to Jose in Spanish, though she conversed with him mostly in English.

In addition to conversational interactions, all parents engaged in some form of language teaching. Again, language teaching interactions were those interactions during which parents taught new words, their meanings, or their pronunciation. Language teaching usually occurred within the context of the children's normal routines, such as snack, and was often embedded in conversations. Elsa's response to Jose's question about whether they were going to watch another video in which she corrected his

pronunciation of the word *episode* is one example of conversation-embedded language teaching. All parents either named or described objects, asked their children to do so, or pronounced words for objects which they had the children repeat aloud. Two parents reported more language teaching interactions than those observed. Angela was not observed doing much language teaching, but explained she does so during Nina's daily routine, especially when she wants to eat or drink something. Dona explained that she frequently works with Carolina on learning the Spanish words for the English words she knows.

While not all parents were observed engaging in print interactions, all said they do sometimes, or have done so. The most common observed or reported print interaction was storybook sharing. All storybook sharing that was observed or described entailed naming and discussing the pictures, though additional activities were described by some parents. For example, Angela said that she does not engage in storybook sharing but then seemed to indicate that she had looked at storybooks with Nina and labeled some pictures. Beatrice and Diana talked about pictures on the inside cover of a storybook and talked about those pictures. Beatrice also mentioned that she frequently shares whole storybooks with Diana, talking about the picture, but also asking and answering questions about events in the pictures. Catarina and Juan were observed each session looking at and talking about storybook pictures, such as the fish in one book. Dona and Carolina were observed engaging in one of their regularly occurring bedtime story sessions. They talked about the pictures but also read each storybook all the way through. Elsa and Jose engaged in storybook sharing during every observation session, reading all the way

through, but also talked some about the pictures. Francisca and Diego were not observed engaging in storybook sharing, but Francisca explained that on the rare occasions they do share storybooks, she names and asks him to identify the pictures.

### **Influences across Cases**

In addition to the characteristics that were present across dyads, factors related to culture, the children, and the parents themselves seemed to be influential across dyads. Both the observational and interview data illuminated these factors. Common influences across cases are described below.

The most common influential factors observed and reported were those related to culture. Of the cultural factors, those that relate to adult experiences seemed most influential on the emergent literacy interactions in which the dyads engaged. The makeup of the family unit residing in the home, the language spoken by these individuals, and the kinds and amount of resources available for use during interactions seemed to affect these interactions. Additionally, the community resources available or not available to the dyads were influential of the interactions in which the dyads engaged in some way.

Regarding the makeup of the families, siblings or other family members often participated in, assisted with, interfered with, or inspired interactions in some way or were reported having done so. For example, older siblings were present for each of the observation sessions of Angela and Nina. They were usually watching TV. This created background noise and Angela sometimes looked at the TV briefly during interactions with Nina. Beatrice, Diana, and Diana's sister decorated the Christmas tree together, and sometimes the sister was involved in the ensuing conversations. Beatrice explained that

usually all of the children listen when she reads Bible stories aloud. Catarina's two-year-old interrupted a storybook sharing session. Both Catarina's younger son and older daughter drew in the large coloring book together during the last observation session where she had several conversations with Juan. At least one of Dona and Carolina's extended family members was always present in the home and often in the same room during observation sessions. Carolina's little cousin listened to the Nemo story Dona read aloud to her. When Elsa shared storybooks with Jose during observation sessions, little sister was always there also, and she would make comments on the pictures like Jose. She drew and attempted to write during Jose's homework time. Francisca's oldest daughter was present for some part of every observation session. During one session, she rode her bike down the length of the trailer as Francisca was trying to explain to Diego how to pedal. Francisca also indicated that her daughter participates in the daily dancing and singing to the Zapateado music.

Each dyad used the resources available to them, and there were similarities between dyads in this use. All dyads had access to toys or real items that were played with, and most often media. For example, all dyads had access to music, and most were observed watching TV programs or videos. Francisca reported doing so though this was not observed. There was always some snack food to request. At least some toys were available. Beatrice and Diana colored in the huge coloring book. Catrina and Juan had one as well. Francisca and Diego also interacted using a coloring book. She asked him to identify a couple of the pictures and encouraged him to draw. Angela and Nina were observed interacting around personal care items, asthma medicine, and snack foods as



well as bubbles and a stuffed elephant. Carolina and Dona played with an alphabet puzzle and talked about videos. One interaction between Elsa and Jose involved putting away groceries.

Additionally, the mother's participation or lack of participation at some point in some form of education program seemed influential across all dyads. Sometimes parents pointed to a parent education program as influential. For example, Catarina explained how the home visiting program provided her with many storybooks, and the speech therapist gave her direction in supporting Juan's language skills. Two parents reported that their own experiences in elementary school were influential. Elsa explained her love of Clifford books and desire to share them with Jose originated when she went a school trip to a library that featured the books during a field trip visit. Beatrice explained that the idea of having her daughter make her name with beans came from an elementary school teacher Beatrice had as a child.

In addition to the cultural factors evident currently in each household, cultural factors present in each parent's childhood seemed influential, though at varying degrees and for different reasons. These childhood cultural factors were illuminated primarily by the interview data. For example, all parents described how they either had or did not have early childhood language and literacy interactions with their parents. Beatrice expressed her vivid memories of her father teaching her reading and writing, and Catarina and Angela spoke of their lack of those experiences. Beatrice said she teaches Diana the same way she was taught by her father. Interestingly, even Francisca mentioned that her parents who were illiterate taught her the vowel sounds, and that she has begun to do this

with Diego. For some parents, it was their own experiences being taught to read in school that were the most influential. Dona remembers being taught the letter sounds. Beatrice noted during the last interview that the idea of having her daughter make her name by gluing beans on paper came from one of her teachers. Some noted that their experiences engaging in emergent literacy interactions with younger or older siblings influenced the characteristics of their current interactions with their children. Dona explained that she was influenced not to talk “baby-talk” to children by helping to care for a brother who was spoken to that way. Two parents noted they share stories about their childhood experiences with their children. Beatrice and Dona described the descriptions about their own childhoods that they share with their daughters.

All parents mentioned at least one community agency or business as influential of their interactions with their children. The children’s school, libraries, home visiting programs, Social Services, churches, museums, and even building or office supply stores were mentioned as influential by the parents. Sometimes home visits from agencies that provide some parent education were influential. It seems that parents who recalled these experiences or participated in parent education programs, engaged in emergent literacy interactions in ways that incorporated what they learned. Catarina gave Juan words but did not have him repeat them often. This was not something she described the speech therapist telling her to do. Angela mentioned that she sometimes sings songs from church to Nina. Beatrice sometimes visits the bookstore with Diana, and sings songs from church. Dona and Elsa help their children with the homework assignments that the school gives. Francisca mentions often to the children that they will be taken away by the police

if they do not behave, because Social Services has told her that her children could be removed.

While cultural factors arising from parents' present or childhood experiences seemed to influence their emergent literacy interactions with their children, parent factors were also influential. Between the parent and child factors, parent factors were the most influential factors reported, while child factors were the most influential ones observed. Parent factors related to both the ideas they explained they have and the current reality that they indicated they experience. The most influential parent factor revealed across dyads arose from parents' ideas. For example, their thoughts about how children learn to talk and read and how parents should support that development seemed influential of their interactions. Angela, Beatrice, Catarina, Dona, Elsa and Francisca indicated in the interviews that they realized the importance of reading to children to help them learn to read. They also mentioned the importance of learning the letters, and letter sounds. Memorizing words was mentioned as important by Dona and Elsa. Francisca emphasized the importance of teaching children letter sounds, as did Beatrice. Most parents said that reading to children from a very early age is important so that they will get used to it. Beatrice indicated that reading to children by at least by nine months of age was a good idea. Catrina mentioned eight or nine months of age as a good time to begin storybook sharing. Elsa mentioned that storybook sharing should begin at six months of age. Dona mentioned that children could be read to before they were born.

As far as parent's ideas about who should teach children to read, Beatrice, Catarina, Dona, and Elsa were sure that parent's should. Dona referred to this

involvement as, “a mission.” Francisca indicated that she felt a little less sure whether parent or teachers should teach the children but she also said it was important, “*Porque cuando estén más grandiositos, si no saben (de leer) van a decir que, ‘Porque no les ensena?’*” [Because when they are big, if they do not know (how to read) they are going to say, “Why did you not teach us?”]. Angela was accidentally not asked her opinion on this issue, but indicated that she thought parents should be very involved in their older children’s homework, including reading.

All parents mentioned that they thought it was important to talk to their children, and that talking to the children and teaching them language skills was needed in order for children to learn to talk. Four parents mentioned they thought children learned to talk from parents naming things in the environment, and this was a commonly observed language teaching interaction. Angela said, “*Por ejemplo, pues decirle que no saben o (como) se dicen las palabras . . . (por) comida, como comida. Hay que decirle como se llama, o si no sabe, explicarle y decirle lo que es.*” [“I can tell that she does not know how to say the words or how to pronounce the words, like food. I have to tell her what it is called and if she does not know explain to her what it is.”] (A-Interview One)

Francisca said, “*Pues ellos aprenden, así. Lo le digo “di esto.”*” [Well, they learn, like this. I tell him, ‘Say that.’] (F-Interview One). Beatrice explained, “*Si ella te pide un agua o un papel, entonces debes que decirle que color es el papel para que ella sepa. También usar libros, porque en los libros están los dibujitos. ¿Verdad?*” [If she asks for water or a paper, then one should tell her what color the paper is so she will know. Also

you can use books, because in books there are pictures, right?"] (B-Interview One) All parents reported or referred to themselves as teaching their children language skills.

One prevalent idea among all parents that was illuminated in the interviews and questionnaires was the desire that their children have strong language skills in both Spanish and English. Even Beatrice whose child was diagnosed using assessments in English wanted her children's difficulties in Spanish addressed in therapy also. Parents whose children spoke mostly Spanish and were diagnosed using assessments in Spanish did not mind some therapy in English, but wanted their children's Spanish needs addressed. Catarina certainly wanted her son who had so much trouble with articulation in Spanish to receive speech therapy in Spanish. Perhaps for this reason, when their children did use English during some conversational interactions, parents usually supported and never discouraged this use.

One parent idea across dyads that seemed to be strongly linked to culture and conversational interaction was that of the importance of good behavior and to some extent, good manners. All parents gave their children many directives. Angela explained that parents that do not talk to their children and spend time with them wind up with children who are "*agresivo, enojado, contestones, se ve como rebelde y todo eso, le gritan, con todo se tiran, se pelean todo eso.*" [aggressive, contrary, rebellious and all of that, that scream and throw everything, hit, and all of that.] (A-Interview One). Beatrice also described similar negative consequences of parents not communicating with children, and she described having had long conversations with her children, including Diana, about how to behave properly in social situations.

*Ella le dice, “No me gusta esta señora ,” . . . Ella es bien abierta. Ella no que le da pena así que lo esconda (sus sentimientos). . . . ella dice que, “Tu vienes a mi casa,” o “Ella es bien,” así. Y yo le digo le, tengo que decir, “No, no tienes que decir a la persona, porque se siente mal uno.” Ella me dice, “Ok Mami, no más. No voy a decir eso.” No, porque cuando vayamos a una casa tu no le vas a decir a esa señora ay, “Esta comida no me gusta,” entonces. Estas ofendiendo a la gente porque estás diciendo- Ay no, no, no. (Yo le digo) “Cualquier comida que a ti te den o cualquier jugo, debes de agarrarlo y decirlo “gracias.” Ok?” (B-Interview One)*

[She will say, “I don’t like that lady . . .” . . . She is very open. She doesn’t bother hiding her feelings. . . . she says, “Come to my house,” or “She is good,” like that. I have to tell her, “You do not have to say that to a person because she will feel bad.” She tells me, “Ok Mommy, no more. I am not going to say that.” (I tell her) “No, because when we go to visit someone’s home, you are not going to say to the lady there, “I don’t like this food,” because you are offending people. You are saying . . . Oh no, no. Whatever food they give you, or whatever juice, you should accept it and say, “Thank you.” Ok”]

Catarina said she sometimes explained to Juan that what he is doing is bad and why.

Both Dona and Elsa explained that they frequently talk with Carolina and Jose about good manners and respect. Francisca emphasized with Diego how to ask someone their name and tell them his name, and she was happy when Diego used the word, “please” to make requests.

While parents’ ideas seemed to highly affect the emergent literacy interactions across the dyads, to at least some extent so did those factors that arose from parents’ current reality. For example, all parents observed during emergent literacy interactions seemed to be more relaxed and happy than frustrated and stressed, even though most noted that they sometimes feel frustrated about some aspect of these interactions.

In addition to the cultural and parent factors that seemed influential across dyads, various child factors seemed influential. The most common child factors to influence the

conversational and language teaching interactions across dyads were their communication strengths and weaknesses. When children could communicate well, the conversations parents had with them seemed generally longer. There was more decontextualized conversation observed between them and their parents or described as occurring. Beatrice and Diana had the long conversation about clowns. Elsa explained that Jose is always talking with her about something. In one observation session he even unexpectedly asked during a homework session, “What happened at the beginning of North Carolina?” In dyads where the children had more difficulty communicating, parents used more directives. Francisca and Angela frequently told their children to do or stop doing something.

While the language abilities of the children seemed to affect the interactions in each dyad, so did the interests of the children. In most dyads, many of the interactions parents engaged or reported engaging in with their children seemed to correspond with what each parent explained interested their children. Catarina said Juan liked helicopters, construction machines, fire trucks and police. She explained that they frequently have related conversations about that topic. A conversation about a helicopter trip with his Lego helicopter was the topic of an observed conversation. Francisca explained that Diego liked animals and was observed naming the pictures in an animal coloring book. Another influential child factor on the interactions within every dyad was each child’s attention span. For example, parents of children with shorter attention spans often switched between activities more quickly, following their children’s lead, or called their children back to the interactions more often. Storybook sharing between Catarina and

Juan was short lived during observation sessions. The interactions between children with longer attention spans and their parents, of course seemed longer. Beatrice and Diana went on with the name writing and vowel sound practice for longer than thirty minutes. Jose sat doing homework for nearly an hour.

### **Summary of Across Case Similarities**

Many emergent literacy interaction characteristics and influences were similar across cases. These similarities were revealed in observational data, interview data, or both. Conversation and language teaching interactions were the most common. Cultural, parent, and child factors seemed influential to some degree in all dyads.

There were many similarities observed across dyads in the conversational and language teaching interactions in which they engaged. Conversations in the here and now, a high level of directives, and closed ended questions seemed common, and many of these interactions occurred as a part of children's normal routine. English use at some level was present in at least some of the conversational interactions in each dyad. Language teaching interactions across dyads involved a large amount of naming and describing, and were more common in the context of children's normal routines. Language teaching was often embedded in other interactions, such as conversation or storybook sharing. All dyads were observed or reported engaging in some print interactions, usually storybook sharing, though the amount reported by two mothers was very low.

Of all of the influences across dyads, cultural influences were most commonly observed and discussed. Of these cultural influences, those at play currently in the home



environment were very influential. In addition to the dyad under study, there were always other family members present and sometimes participating while interactions. Across all dyads, the material resources in the home and the resources available in the community influenced the interactions. Two of the children's schools assigned homework, making literacy teaching within dyads more likely, and three families incorporated songs from church into their conversational interactions.

Parent's ideas also affected interactions. All parents had their own ideas about reading and language development and teaching in those areas, even if they were not literate or did not frequently converse or read with them. Parents' ideas seemed to influence these interactions as did children's own interests and abilities. Though every child was diagnosed with a speech or language disability, three dyads seemed to have little difficulty communicating, while three had more difficulty.

### **Across Cases Differences**

While similarities were evident across all dyads, some differences were evident between dyads and sub-groups of dyads. Some differences across dyads were evident across most interaction categories. The proportions at which dyads engaged in the various interaction types differed. For example, some dyads engaged more often in language teaching than others. For some interaction categories, parents used more of a particular strategy or technique than other parents did. For example, two parents used more directives than did other parents. These differences will be discussed below.

### **Interaction Differences between Dyads**

While conversational interactions were present in all dyads and conversing during normal routines or play was common, there were some differences between dyads.

Francisca was the only parent to tell her child that a monster-like creature or the police would get him. Though all parents used directives, Francisca seemed to use them more frequently than did the other parents. Catarina used many statements to clarify what she had just heard Juan say. During conversational interactions, clarification seemed to occur more often between she and Juan than it did with the other parents and their children.

Though no dyad's decontextualized conversation level seemed extremely high, Beatrice and Diana and Elsa and Jose were observed to have more decontextualized conversations than did the other dyads. They had a couple of these conversations during the tree decorating, one of these about fear of clowns. They had another conversation about what monkeys eat, and another about what foods mice like. Jose began one of these conversations during homework time, when he asked his mom where she thought a couple of friends of his that had missed school that day were.

While some dyads differed in some of the characteristics of their conversational interactions, language teaching was different in some dyads as well. The only parent observed to teach equivalent Spanish and English words was Beatrice. These sessions were usually lengthy, but both Beatrice and Diana seemed to enjoy themselves. While naming objects was common in both conversational and language teaching interactions, when Francisca tried to teach Diego words she did not stop at labeling. While she consistently used the technique of saying the word and having him repeat, she seemed to

want to help him with many language uses such as asking people their names, telling his own name, and making requests as well as identifying objects.

While all dyads engaged in conversation and some kind of language teaching, only some dyads engaged in print interactions during observations. Three dyads' print interaction characteristics were unusual. Dona and Elsa used print referencing during storybook sharing, but they each did it differently. Dona sometimes used her thumb to point above the words as she read, and Elsa pointed below the words, but stopped after most phrases, and referenced the same print again while Jose repeated after her. Both dyads also were observed reading or reported reading the same books repeatedly, though this is not unusual in dyads not participating in the study. Catarina's storybook sharing was also unique in that Juan "read" the book to her. He mixed actual words with a lot of jargon. She confessed during interviews not to understand most of it. The story summaries that Carolina and Jose were assigned by their prekindergarten program seemed unusual as well. The assigned reading from the Head Start that Juan brought home was less demanding than theirs, yet they were older. Two dyads were not seen engaging in print interactions. Angela conversed with Nina, seemed to teach her some words, and reported teaching words frequently. She was not observed, however, to engage in print interactions or literacy teaching. Francisca did not engage in literacy teaching either, and the only print interaction observed was with a coloring book where words were not read or referenced. Both parents explained that they have shared storybooks with their children, but neither implied that this is a frequent occurrence. Angela and Nina,

Francisca and Diego, the dyads in which storybook sharing was reported but not observed, explained that they rarely if ever engage in storybook sharing.

In addition to differences in language teaching, conversation, and print interactions, there were important differences across dyads in the way they engaged in literacy teaching. Elsa and Jose were observed engaged in the most literacy teaching. Several instances of literacy teaching occurred during one homework session during which letter names was the primary focus. The print referencing discussed above where Elsa would point to the print after doing so while reading and have Jose repeat it was the primary form of literacy teaching in this dyad. They were also the only dyad that engaged in this form of literacy teaching. Dona reported engaging in literacy teaching with Carolina. Carolina and Jose attended the same public prekindergarten program, also affiliated with Head Start, that assigned homework involving literacy teaching. Vowel sound instruction, while discussed as having been part of most parents' literacy learning experiences as children, was only observed between Beatrice and Diana. This interaction had a fun, sing-song quality to it. Beatrice was the only parent observed to teach her child how to write her name. She had Diana copy her name one row below the other for several lines. Catarina tried to encourage Juan let her teach him to write his name, and to connect dots in a coloring book, but he refused.

### **Across Case Child Speech/Language Related Differences and Similarities**

In addition to the differences in emergent literacy interactions across dyads, there were some differences between the cases in reference to children's speech/language screening and assessment results, and in the language in which speech/language therapy

was provided. Results in these data sources related to who employed the therapists, the languages used to assess the children, and the language/s that were used during treatment. These results were illuminated when comparing what was learned in the review of each child's speech therapy records, the DIAL-4 screening results, and the information parents shared during the final interviews and subsequent Member Checking.

Private therapists and therapists working directly for schools or hospitals served the children. Three of the children, Diana, Dona, and Jose, were diagnosed and were served by private speech therapists. Two children, Juan and Diego, were diagnosed and were served by speech therapists employed by the local school system. Nina was diagnosed by a private therapist connected to a local hospital, and will be served by the local school system.

In addition to who employed the speech therapists, assessments were given and therapy was administered using different languages. Assessments were given using Spanish, or English, and sometimes both. Jose and Carolina's therapists incorporated assessments in Spanish, though they reverted to the English versions when it became obvious that these children had stronger abilities in that language. Nina and Juan were diagnosed with assessments in Spanish given by an English-speaking therapist with the help of interpreters. Diego was assessed in both languages by an interdisciplinary team in which there was one Spanish-speaking and one English-speaking speech therapist. Diana, who speaks Spanish as her primary language, and whose mother reported her strong commitment to developing her daughters Spanish skills, was assessed and being served using English only. Again, Diana was being served using English only. Catarina

believed that Juan's therapist who sees him at Head Start speaks some Spanish, and does therapy in Spanish, but the therapist informed the primary researcher that she speaks little Spanish and conducts therapy using only a few words in Spanish. Carolina and Juan were being served in English by bilingual therapists. Diego's speech therapist explained that she speaks some Spanish words but not many. While Dona and Elsa did not indicate they had any misgivings about therapy being given in English, they had each decided to support their children's Spanish skills at home. Francisca said that she wanted therapy to be conducted in both Spanish and English.

Another quality of speech and language therapy delivery in addition to the employers of the therapists and the language used during assessments and therapy sessions came to light from reading the questionnaires, analysis of the interview data, and the review children's speech therapy records that related to the way the therapists communicated with the parents. Immediately after the end of the first interview with Beatrice, she brought the primary investigator a note that she received from her child's English speaking therapist. Beatrice explained that she gets one every week, but does not understand them. Dona once explained that she was not receiving enough information about what strategies she should use at home to help her daughter work on the areas for practice mentioned in the notes that Carolina was bringing home.

Yet another result that related to service delivery was something Angela explained at the end of the second observation session. She seemed very confused about the whole evaluation and diagnosis process, in spite of the fact that her oldest son had also received speech therapy in the past. She said she was given many appointments all

over town. She could not say what exactly they were for, or even how to find the office locations. That confusion resulted in a five-month delay between Nina's diagnosis at age two, and the beginning of therapy at age three. Perhaps the fact that Angela was not an English speaker and did not have reliable transportation also contributed to the confusion and delay.

### **Across Case Differences Summary**

Individual dyads differed in the types of emergent literacy interactions they had during observation sessions. The characteristics of those interactions also differed. There were also differences noted between cases which were reflected in the DIAL-4 screening results, the speech/language assessment results noted during the records review, and what parents reported in the interviews and the in-depth questionnaires. In the following section, differences between dyad subgroups will be described, as well as some characteristics that may influence these differences.

### **Dyad Subgroup Differences**

#### **Introduction**

While differences between individual dyads seemed meaningful, there were also differences between sub-groups of dyads. Some parents in some dyads seemed to share characteristics that differed from those in other dyads. The various subgroups included those dyads in which the mothers have been in the U.S. for longer or shorter amounts of time and those dyads that have children with mild versus more severe speech problems. There are dyads that include children who are three or older than three years and those dyads that are primarily monolingual or primarily bilingual. When looking at the results

across the subgroups, some patterns seem to emerge which may or may not indicate the presence of previously discussed influences. While comparing across dyad subgroups produced interesting results, one caveat must be kept in mind. While each dyad was observed for a total of six hours, less interaction data was collected during the observations of Angela and Francisca because fewer interactions took place, or the conditions during the observations made some forms of data collection unfeasible.

### **Dyad Subgroup Differences/Interactions and Influences**

There seem to be differences in some of the characteristics of the parents in these two dyad subgroups that indicate the possible influence of various cultural, parent, and child factors. These two dyad subgroups differ in the amount of time they have lived in the U.S. and some of the child factors involved. Beatrice, Dona, and Elsa have lived in the U.S. for 14 or more years, whereas Angela, Catarina, and Francisca have lived here for under 14 years. In addition to living longer in the US, Beatrice, Dona, and Elsa's children also seem to have less severe communication difficulties, whereas Angela, Catarina, and Francisca have children that seem to have more difficulty communicating. Additionally, their children are the youngest children across dyads, all three years old. More instances of each kind of emergent literacy interaction seem to have occurred in the subgroup belonging to Beatrice, Dona, and Elsa. This result is probably because Angela was not observed to engage print or literacy teaching interactions, and Francisca, though she did look at a coloring book with Diego, engaged in little interaction of this kind either. Catarina was not observed to engage in much literacy teaching but she and Juan interacted more often as a whole than did Francisca and Angela.



Conversational interactions differed most between these dyads, with other emergent literacy interactions differing less. Beatrice, Dona, and Elsa seemed to have more decontextualized conversations with their children than did Angela, Catarina and Francisca. Angela and Francisca used more behavioral directives with their children than did the parents in the other dyad subgroup. This difference was evident in spite of the fact that there was a little less collected data on Angela's and Francisca's interactions than on other dyad subgroup. In general, the conversations that Beatrice, Dona, and Elsa had with their children were longer than those Angela, Catarina, and Francisca were seen having with their children. Their conversations had more conversational turns, with longer utterance within turns. These conversational differences seemed to be related to the children's communication abilities. Nina and Diego used mostly single words, and more grunting or whining than the children in the other dyads. They spoke fewer words overall and fewer of their words seemed intelligible. Their mothers in turn, seemed to respond with fewer words in short sentences. While Juan's communication skills still seemed very delayed, he used more words and longer sentences. He often mixed real words that were intelligible with jargon and unintelligible words. Catarina responded by reacting to what she understood, and clarifying what she did not understand. Sometimes just the process of clarifying her understanding could take many turns, thus lengthening the conversations. In addition, Angela and Francisca were the only dyads in which non-verbal turn-taking was observed.

Language teaching between the two subgroups also seemed to vary. Angela, Catrina, and Francisca, seemed to use the strategy of defining and describing less often

than did Beatrice, Dona, and Elsa. Rather than defining and describing, Angela, Catrina, and Francisca used more naming and labeling while teaching vocabulary. Interestingly, as indicated previously, Catarina seem to ask infrequently for Juan to repeat words, whereas Angela and Francisca seemed to do this often.

Beatrice, Dona and Elsa all were either observed to engage in or mentioned they engaged in direct literacy teaching. Dona and Elsa usually did so in the context of their children's homework, but they both explained that they used workbooks with their children over school breaks when no homework was assigned. Beatrice engaged in literacy teaching with Diana during play and as a part of special sessions, though Diana was not assigned homework by her school. Beatrice too mentioned that she sometimes used workbooks with Diana for literacy teaching.

While there were interaction differences observed between these two subgroups, it is beyond the scope of this qualitative study to determine whether having the younger children, being in the U.S. a shorter amount of time, or having children that had more communication difficulty was more influential on the emergent literacy interactions that took place in these two subgroups. Perhaps some combination of these influences made fewer interactions, shorter conversations, more behavioral directives, and more naming and describing during language teaching interactions necessary or likely. The following chapter will explore how the most current literature aids in the understanding of these results.

**Parent education level.** While the two dyad subgroups above differed in some parent and child factors and the years in the US, two of the parents in the subgroup

differed in education level. Catarina is a high school graduate, but Angela and Francisca had the lowest level of formal education among dyads. Angela reported completing the sixth grade and Francisca said in an interview that she did not attend school, but indicated on the first parent questionnaire that she completed the third grade. While there is likely to be a relationship between Francisca's rare storybook sharing and her illiteracy, it is unclear whether reaching only the sixth grade could explain Angela's choice not to engage in storybook sharing with Nina. In fact, both Angela and Francisca mentioned low financial resources when explaining their level of storybook sharing. Catarina seemed to have access to many books in her home. In addition, Angela indicated that she felt that right now her daughter needed more help with communication of basic needs rather than pre-literacy skills. Perhaps the level of directives used among dyads was also influenced by the parents' education level, with the parents with the least education giving the most directives, but it is not possible to determine this with certainty.

Beatrice, Catrina, Dona, and Elsa reported having completed more years of formal education than did Angela and Francisca, with Catarina and Dona having graduated from high school, Elsa having completed 11th grade, and Beatrice having completed ninth grade. It seems within each of the dyads where there was a history of more years of formal education, there were fewer directives used during conversational interactions. In addition, there seemed to be a wider variety of interactions. Storybook sharing was observed only within the dyads in which the mothers had higher than a sixth grade education. A session during which the mother read through or attempted to read through a storybook was only observed in dyads in which the mother had completed the 11<sup>th</sup> or

12<sup>th</sup> grade, yet Beatrice reported reading many books all the way through with Diana. Though one possible explanation for this dynamic may be the education level of the parents, the fact that the parents with the lowest education level also had children with the most severe communication needs, and that these parents mentioned economic strain as another factor.

While some dyad subgroups differed in the amount of formal education they reported, some dyads reported having participated in parent education recently, others long ago, and others not at all. Angela and Francisca reported participation in no parent education that influenced their interactions with the child they had who was a participant in the study. Interestingly, Angela had participated in a home visiting program when her oldest son was younger, and both of Francisca's children had been enrolled in Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Head Start for several summers. Therefore, they had once had the opportunity to benefit from parent education that could have influenced their emergent literacy interactions with the focus children of the study. They did not indicate however that those programs had any impact on their current interactions with their children.

Mothers in some dyads did mention education experiences, but these experiences did not only take place in formal sessions. Catarina had past opportunities for parent-education through her involvement in the same home visiting program in which Angela had participated. Juan also received visits from a speech therapist that provided information to Catarina. She noted that these programs had influenced her conversational and storybook sharing interactions with Juan. While Beatrice reported no recent parent

education participation, she did mention having received home visits when her oldest child was a baby. She said she learned about baby care from the visits, but already knew about the importance of reading to and talking with children because of her childhood experiences. Again, she explained she had benefitted a great deal from the childhood literacy and language interactions she had with her own parents, especially her father. While Elsa also reported no formal parent education participation, she also reported that her parents and then older brother worked with her on literacy skills. Donna as well reported no recent participation in parent education programs, but she mentioned she had benefitted from her own experiences trying to teach language and reading to other Latino adults, and from helping to raise a sibling.

It seems that perhaps not only formal school oriented and formal parent education programs influenced the emergent literacy interactions within some of the dyads. Rather, it seems that a combination of formal and informal experiences in adulthood as well as experiences in the parents' childhoods were influential on the proportion of the different kinds of interactions they engaged in with their children, and the characteristics of those interactions. Again, while the level of education across dyads may have an impact on the emergent literacy interactions in which they engage with their children, these results only shed light on the possibilities, and do not help draw any definitive conclusions.

**Language dominance.** In addition to differences across dyad subgroups in years living in the US, the severity of children's language disability, and the amount of their participation in educational experiences, there were some differences between the dyad subgroup who spoke mostly Spanish but were also fluent in English, and the dyad

subgroup who spoke mostly Spanish and rarely spoke English. It is important to take into account when comparing across these dyad subgroups that more data overall was collected in the Spanish dominant subgroup containing four dyads, than in the *English also* subgroup containing two dyads. There were also more coded data segments within the Spanish speaking subgroup. Angela, Beatrice, Catarina, and Francisca all spoke mostly Spanish with their children. Dona and Elsa spoke both Spanish and English to their children. Notably, Elsa spoke more English with Jose than Dona spoke with Carolina, and Dona used more media in Spanish than did Elsa with Jose.

There were some interesting characteristics in the conversational interactions observed in the dyad subgroup who spoke both English and Spanish. For example, both mothers seemed more likely to use Spanish while giving directives. One interesting feature was the fact that a conversational interaction could start in one language, shift to the other, and even shift back again before finishing. Sometimes the mother would use Spanish through an entire conversation, and the child might speak only in English. As mentioned previously, when speaking in English each mother used some grammar in different ways than a native speaker might be expected to use it. Additionally, the mothers in the two dyads that spoke English as well as Spanish engaged in literacy teaching more often than did the dyads who spoke predominantly Spanish. During storybook sharing, they seemed just as likely to talk about pictures with their children as the mothers in the Spanish only dyads, though the mothers in the *English also* dyads were observed reading storybooks straight through and talking about the reasons for the events pictured as well.

**Resources.** In addition to differences between dyad subgroups in the interaction types and characteristics, language dominance, there were differences in the resources available. Beatrice, Catarina, and Dona seemed to have more of some material resources than Elsa, and Angela, but all of these parents seemed to have some toys, storybooks, and other items such as snacks present, around which many of the emergent literacy interactions revolved. Francisca and Diego seemed to have the least amount of resources. Even in their home, there was a room in which toys were stored. She and Diego played using the balls, a coloring book, cars, a doll, and an action figure he had. Storybooks were not observed in Angela or Francisca's homes, and they explained that they kept them in a book bag in another room or closet when they did have them. Storybooks were seen in all of the other homes. Beatrice and Dona reported keeping their storybooks in a shelf in their children's bedrooms. Elsa explained that her storybooks are stored in the children's bedroom toy box or on top of furniture in the living room. Catarina explained that her storybooks are kept in the toy box in the living room or on a shelf in the children's bedroom.

### **Summary of Across Case and Dyad Subgroup Differences**

There seemed to be differences in emergent literacy interaction characteristics and influences across dyads and dyad subgroups. The conversational interaction characteristics in some dyads varied from other dyads. Three dyads had more decontextualized conversation than did other dyads. Mothers in two dyads seemed to use more directives than did mothers in other dyads. In addition, language teaching strategies were observed to differ slightly between dyads, with three mothers using more naming

and labeling than describing and defining. The amount of observed print interactions also varied across dyads, with four mothers observed engaging in it more than did others. The characteristics of storybook sharing also varied, with two mothers reading straight through storybooks, though in different ways. The amount and characteristics of literacy teaching also differed across dyads. Two mothers engaged in literacy teaching in the context of homework, with one of these mothers also doing so in the context of storybook sharing, while three other mothers taught more writing, or attempted to do so.

In addition to the differences that were evident across cases, there were differences in the emergent literacy interactions between dyad subgroups. The subgroup with less time in the U.S. and more severely language impaired children seemed to use more directives as a group, and engaged in shorter, less decontextualized conversations. Their language teaching interactions were more oriented towards naming and labeling objects than defining and describing them. They also were observed to and reported that they engage in less print interactions as a subgroup.

While one dyad subgroup differed in the number of years in the U.S. and in the severity of their children's language disabilities, another subgroup differed in the number of years of formal schooling they had completed. One dyad subgroup differed in their participation in parent education programs, and the kinds of or amounts of language and literacy education they had received as children from their parents, schools, or other family members. In the dyads where the mothers had more of these kinds of educational experiences, a greater variety of emergent literacy interactions took place. There were more conversational interactions, some of which were more decontextualized, having



more conversation turns. More print interactions occurred, especially storybook sharing. In addition, parents with more educational experiences engaged in a wider variety of language teaching interactions such as expansion, defining and describing, as well as teaching Spanish and English word equivalents.

In addition to dyad subgroups differing in their participation in educational experiences, dyad subgroups also differed in the amount of English or Spanish spoken. There was more switching between languages during conversational interactions in the two dyads where both languages were spoken than in the dyads where only Spanish was spoken. There was more literacy teaching in this dyad subgroup, and more storybook sharing in which an entire book was read all the way through.

Differences in the amount of resources in homes and where storybooks were kept were also evident. While most dyads seemed to have sufficient resources, Francisca and Diego seemed to have less available. Angela and Francisca stored their storybooks in book bags in out of the way places, whereas Beatrice, Catarina, Dona, and Elsa had them in areas such as toy boxes or bookshelves that were more accessible.

While there were observed differences between dyads and dyad subgroups, the results do not explain the reasons for these differences. They do however describe them. In the following chapter, the relationships between the current literature and these across case findings will be explored. In addition, the implications of these findings for further research and improved practices will also be presented.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this research was to investigate emergent literacy and language interactions that parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language difficulties engage in together at home. The questions that guided this research were:

1. How are families of Latino heritage engaging in emergent literacy interactions with their children who have speech and language impairments?
2. What sociocultural and language socialization factors influence the characteristics of these interactions?

A qualitative study using an exploratory, multiple case design was used to investigate emergent literacy interactions within and across six parent-child dyads, and the factors that may influence these interactions. This chapter summarizes the findings that answered the research questions, highlights new or noteworthy results, and follows these topics with recommendations for practice and directions for future research. The limitations of this research are also described.

#### **Emergent Literacy Interactions and Characteristics**

In answering the first question about how families of Latino heritage engage in emergent literacy with their children who have speech and language impairments, the results revealed important information about the six dyads who participated. Some of

these findings support other literature in this area, and some findings may new or contradictory.

The most common type of emergent literacy interaction engaged in by each dyad was conversational. This finding is supported by Delgado-Gaitan (1990) who explained it is common in families of Latino heritage. Kummerer (2010) explained that conversational interactions are more likely in the homes of Latino families who have children with speech and language impairments. Like those parents described by Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009), the parents in this study conversed with their children most often in the context of their normal routines. Most conversation was about objects and actions in the immediate environment, though the parents who had children with less severe speech and language issues used more decontextualized conversation about school-days, behavior, and the like. Unlike the findings of Leva, Sparks, and Reese (2012), elaborative reminiscing was not observed, though the parents of the older and more verbal children did report having conversations with their children about their school days.

Conversational interactions were most often related to ongoing events and objects in the immediate environment. These results seem to contradict those of Langdon (2008). Conversation about the here and now were more common in the dyads with younger children who had more difficulty communicating, and who have parents that have lived in the U.S. for less time.

In addition to conversing with children regarding on-going events, the Latino parents in this study frequently named and labeled items or asked their children to do so.

The parents with three-year-old children with few words and less intelligible speech engaged more frequently in naming and labeling during conversational interactions, than other parents who blended this strategy with others. This finding supports the findings of Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009) who described parents of Latino children with speech and language difficulties as also providing labels, and Romero-Contreras (2004) who found naming and labeling common in dyads of Latino heritage with children with typical language development.

Parents in this study asked more closed than open-ended questions, or close to an equal number of open-ended versus closed-ended questions. Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009) noticed the same tendency in one Latino mother of one of her speech/language therapy clients. Van Balkom et al. (2010), as well as Yont et al. (2002) had similar findings. They found that the parents of children with difficulty communicating tended to ask more closed-ended than open-ended questions. In addition to asking many closed-ended questions, the parents in this study sang with, to, or around their children. Rodriguez (2005) also noted similar findings.

Two parents engaged in non-verbal turn-taking with their children. These children were younger and had more difficulty communicating than the older children of the other parents. Many non-verbal interactions were noted by van Balkom et al. (2010) among children with speech and language impairments and their parents.

The four parents in the study who were predominantly Spanish speaking used Spanish exclusively to converse with their children. They had lived in the U.S. a shorter time than had the other parents, and had fewer years of formal education. These parents

indicated that they knew some English, and seemed to understand all but a few of the single English words their children sometimes used during conversations occurring in Spanish. They often responded to these words, but in Spanish.

Two parents were bilingual, had lived in the U.S. for more than 15 years, and were from El Salvador and The Dominican Republic, respectively. These parents often went back and forth between English and Spanish while having conversations with their children. More often, during the observed conversations, parents might speak in Spanish and their children might respond in English. Sometimes the conversations at that point would switch to all English, and sometimes each partner would continue in the same language in which they had started. Other times, the parent during a conversational turn might say a sentence in Spanish and follow it with a sentence in English, or mix Spanish and English in one sentence. It is not unusual for bilingual speakers, Spanish-English speakers included, to switch back and forth between languages while conversing (Centeno, Anderson, & Obler, 2007; Poplack, 1980). In addition, the parent from the Dominican Republic worded many sentences in a way that seemed to resemble another dialect, perhaps an African American one. According to Zentella (1997) it is not unusual for Spanish-English teenagers in New York who go to school with African-American teenagers, to adopt the dialect those teens are using. This parent lived most of her life in The Bronx, New York.

The three parents with children whose communication difficulties seemed less severe, who lived in the U.S. longer, and who had more years of education, had decontextualized conversations more often than parents who did not share these

characteristics. These conversations were commonly about the children's school days, the parent's childhoods, and how to communicate and behave properly in social situations in the community. All of the three most educated parents who had been in the U.S. longer mentioned frequent discussions about proper behavior. Two of the parents indicated that they have these discussions with their children because they think it is very important that their children learn to behave well in social situations, especially to communicate in a mannerly way in these situations. In Billings (2009) other parents of Latino heritage indicated that the development of good behavior was an important school readiness skill. Simply explaining that good behavior is important to these parents does not fully communicate the depth of parents' concern in regards to behavior. The concepts or ideals of *respeto* and being *bien educado* or respect and having good manners are actually strongly held cultural values common in Mexican and Latino culture (De La Vega, 2007). In the discussions that Beatrice described having with her daughter and other children about how to behave, she was giving them advice, or *consejos*. Both parents indicated that they had these conversations because of how their parents had done the same with them when they were children.

In addition to having a great many conversational interactions, the Latino parents in this study also engaged in interactions where they tried to build their children's speech and language skills in a more deliberate way that seemed more intentional than the casual conversational interactions. Parents usually engaged in language teaching interactions in the context of their children's routines, and these interactions were often embedded in conversations. Naming and labeling was most common strategy used across dyads.

Again, this result is similar to that observed in Mexican mothers without children with speech/language impairments (Romero-Contreras, 2004). The three parents with more years of formal education, more years of residence in the US, and older children with less severe speech language disabilities used more defining and describing than those mothers in the U.S. a shorter amount of time who had younger children with more severe speech language problems.

Contradicting findings of Paradise and Rogoff (2009), the one parent who reported indigenous origins engaged in direct teaching, not guided practice or observation, to help support her daughter's communication skills. Interestingly, she described how her father also engaged in such direct teaching, mostly using Nahuatl. This parent worked with her child on her vocabulary by directly teaching her words in Spanish, at the same time as their English equivalents.

All the parents in this study were observed engaging in or reported engaging in print-based interactions with their children. The most common context in which print-based interactions occurred was during storybook sharing. The two parents with the least education, the least amount of time living in the U.S., and the children who were the youngest with more communication difficulties indicated that they rarely engaged in storybook sharing. All parents were observed or reported naming and describing pictures at some point when they engaged in storybook sharing. Two parents read storybooks all the way through. They also discussed events that occurred in the stories they shared, or asked and answered questions about the events in the story. They used print referencing as they read aloud to their children. These parents that moved beyond naming and

describing pictures had more years of formal education than those parents that had less years of formal education. Weigel et al. (2006) also noted this relationship between education and richer storybook sharing among non-Latino parents whose children do not have speech or language disabilities. The parents who shared storybooks this way had children who were older and had less severe speech or language difficulties. Two parents read longer books to their children. One parent read the Bible aloud regularly to her children, something Purcell-Gates (2013) also noted among the literacy practices of the Mexican migrant farmworkers in her study. Another parent occasionally read chapter books to her five-year-old daughter. Four parents read to their children from storybooks that were stored out in the open, whether in the living room on furniture, or in a toy box there, or in a toy-box or cabinet in their children's rooms. Two parents, the ones who shared storybooks less frequently, reported keeping storybooks in book bags in a closet or other room.

In addition to conversation and language teaching, three parents in this study engaged in literacy teaching. Literacy teaching by parents of Latino heritage who were of low socio-economic status has also been noted by LaForett and Mendez (2010). Parents commonly engaged in literacy teaching in the context of homework, and one of the mothers did so in the context of storybook sharing. While engaged in literacy teaching, these parents focused on writing, identification of letters, and letter sounds, including Spanish vowel sounds. Their children were older than the other children, who were all three years old.



The literacy teaching of the parents in the study involved homework and the use of workbooks. Two parents engaged in literacy teaching during their children's homework routine, but also reported teaching their children literacy skills using workbooks when homework was not assigned. One mother engaged in literacy teaching in a more spontaneous way during two observation sessions, but also reported using workbooks occasionally and setting up special sessions to teach her daughter letter names and sounds. Santos and Alfred (2011) also noted literacy teaching using workbooks as common among parents who are of Latino heritage.

Sometimes these interactions had a fun quality to them, and sometimes they were more drill-like, as also noticed in the findings by Gillanders and Jimenez (2004) among parents of Latino heritage and their children without speech or language impairments. One parent was observed to use the practice of using *planas* discussed in the above research, where she wrote the child's name once and had her copy underneath for several lines. She also used the *castigo* (drills) style of teaching mentioned by Perry et al. (2008) and these interactions seemed to add an element of fun as noted in the same study. That same mother shared that she was teaching her child to spell her name by having her make it out of clay and beans, and idea she got from one of her elementary school teachers when in Mexico.

The three mothers in this study who had more years of formal education, older and less language impaired children, and who had lived in the U.S. did more literacy teaching than those mothers who had been living in the U.S. for fewer years, had fewer years of formal education, and whose children had more difficulty communicating.

While two parents were bilingual, they used or reported using English during literacy teaching as described in Farver et al. (2013) among Latino parents whose children have typical language development.

In addition to focusing on letter names, sounds, and writing during literacy teaching interactions, parents who engaged in literacy teaching used print referencing during this interaction. Sawyer et al. (2013) found that some parents of children with speech language impairments also used print referencing. Interestingly, the bilingual parents reported and were observed using English when engaging in literacy teaching interactions, a finding that Farver et al. (2013) noted also.

### **Emergent Literacy Interaction Influences**

In addition to illuminating the types and characteristics of the emergent literacy interactions parents engaged in with their children, the results of this study shed light on some of the factors that seemed to influence these interactions. These influences seemed to relate to various child, parent and cultural factors. Some of these findings about influences are similar to the findings in the literature, while others are not.

Various child factors influenced the emergent literacy interactions that parents had with their children. Chief among these was the level of difficulty that each child had communicating. The more difficulty the children had communicating, the more often parents conversations with them were shorter, had breakdowns, included more directives, and centered in the here and now. Because they sometimes did not understand what their children said, they sometimes tried to clarify what their children were saying. When the children had shorter utterances, their parents responded with fewer utterances. The more

advanced communication skills of three of the children seemed to allow their parents to have more decontextualized and longer conversations with them. In addition to affecting parents' conversations with their children, the children's relative ease of difficulty communicating affected language teaching. Noticing the difficulties their children had communicating, three parents engaged in language teaching that often involved naming and labeling, and less defining and describing than did parents with children who were older and communicated more easily. These findings are similar to those of van Balkom et al. (2010). Children's communication skills level also impacted print interactions, chiefly, storybook sharing. In an effort to help their children with their language skills, parents of the children in this study who had more difficulty communicating reported using storybook sharing as a time to teach language skills by identifying pictures. The easier time that some children had communicating seemed to allow parents to engage in more frequent and lengthy storybook sharing that went beyond labeling pictures, and to teach literacy skills such as identifying letters, letter sounds, and writing, which the parents of the less advanced communicators did not engage.

For the parents in this study, in addition to child factors, parent factors seemed influential. Both parents' ideas and recent experiences influenced the print, conversational, language and literacy teaching interactions they had with their children.

All parents demonstrated and communicated that they cared about their children's language and literacy development even though some read fewer books to their children and engaged in less literacy teaching. This characteristic has been noted by Billings (2009); Delgado-Gaitan (1990); and Lopez et al. (2007). This concern seemed to

influence parents to see themselves as educators. Some parents indicated that they thought it important to teach children new words. They all said that they thought that talking to children was how children learn to talk, and all did converse with their children. All wanted their children to improve skills in both Spanish and English. This was a prevalent desire of the Latino parents in Chicago who participated in Farr and Dominguez's (2005) study. All of the parents in this study thought reading aloud improved language and reading skills, just as the GED students in Santos and Alfred (2011) did, even though not all engaged in frequent print interactions. None of the parents indicated that children learned to read naturally, so most of the parents taught their children skills such as letter and vowel sound identification. Some of these findings are similar to those of Debaryshe et al. (2000). All but one parent indicated that they thought it was important to begin reading early to children because this helps them get accustomed to reading and they will remember the stories and words later, so most of them had already begun reading aloud to their children years ago. While four of the parents in this study thought it was important to read to children for this reason, only one parent indicated she liked a certain series, Clifford books, because they teach social skills. This finding contradicts slightly the findings of Reese and Gallimore (2000) and Perry et al. (2008), who found that most of the parents of Latino heritage in their studies were interested in teaching their children moral or behavior lessons using the storybooks.

In addition to the way the above ideas about emergent literacy interactions with their children seemed to influence these interactions, another idea which related to culture also seemed influential. As mentioned above in the section on interactions, the value

three parents place on *respeto* and *bien educado*, respect and good manners, seemed to influence them to have frequent conversations with them about how to behave and communicate properly in social situations. These *consejos* emphasized communicating with authority in a respectful and mannerly way.

In addition to parents' ideas, their feelings, the language they spoke with their children, and their work and chore schedules influenced their interactions. While three parents shared that they sometimes felt stressed, it seemed during observations that they enjoyed the interactions they had with their children. All parents explained that they enjoy teaching their children and watching them improve because of their efforts. This enjoyment seems to have influenced the busiest parents to make time in their day for emergent literacy interactions in spite of their schedules. The findings of Santos and Alfred (2011) indicated that time pressure can make it harder for parents with low incomes to engage in as many emergent literacy interactions with their children as they might like, because they are often forced to work long hours in low wage jobs to provide for their families' basic needs. The one parent in this study who was unemployed was did not seem to engage in any more emergent literacy interactions than the other parents.

Parents' enjoyment of the interactions was influential, and the language they used in these interactions was influential as well. As mentioned previously, the four parents who knew more Spanish than English spoke only Spanish to their children. Both bilingual parents in this study had spoken English to their children since they were babies, and started speaking English to their children later. This decision seemed to influence the degree of fluency their children had in English and were developing in

Spanish, affecting the language of the conversational interactions they had. Both parents had indicated that they chose English when the children were babies because they were trying to make sure their children could communicate. It is not unusual that some immigrant parents are bilingual. According to the Pew Research Center (2015) based on their 2002 National Survey of Latinos, 46% of adults of Latino heritage in the U.S. speak both Spanish and English. In fact, Latino adults are more likely as a whole to speak both languages than either one or the other exclusively. According to the same survey, children of Latino heritage are even more likely to speak both languages than are adults.

In addition to child and parent factors, parents in this study were influenced by cultural factors. These cultural factors were composed of both socio-cultural and language socialization factors, but it was unclear in the results which of the influential cultural factors fell under socio-cultural versus socio-cultural types of influence.

Within the homes of the parents in this study, were several influences. As mentioned previously, siblings and other family members were often present or involved in the emergent literacy interactions parents had with their children. Younger and older siblings were often involved in some way, but this participation only rarely interfered with the interactions. Siblings might be present for storybook sharing, sit at the table during homework, or participate in a conversation about tree decoration or a television show. While older siblings in one home helped with one mother with retrieving English words during language teaching, the findings in this study did not indicate that the focus children were included in or observed older children's homework sessions as reported in Kummerer and Lopez-Reyna (2009) or engage in literacy teaching as in Perry et al.

(2008). Extended family members did engage in some observed emergent literacy interactions in one parent's home, such as conversation, as also found in Farr and Dominguez (2005).

In addition to the influences of family members, the material resources available influenced interactions of all of the parents in this study. The access they had to toys, music, television programming and videos made possible the emergent literacy interactions they engaged in with their children. This result was also shown in Rodriguez (2005), where the Dominican parents utilized these resources during many interactions with their children with special needs. Access to community resources beyond the home influenced the interactions between the parents and their children. One community resource that was influential of the emergent literacy interactions of half of the parents with their children were children's prekindergarten programs. Each of these children's prekindergarten programs assigned some kind of reading and/or writing homework. One parent also reported that a home visiting program and her child's visiting speech/language therapy programs as being influential. These community resources have been found to be influential of other parents' interactions as well (Gillanders & Jimenez, 2004; Kent-Walsh et al., 2010; Kummerer et al., 2007; Reese & Gallimore, 2000).

Not only did some of the parents in this study draw on their community resources, they also drew on the resources of their own experiences as children. Sometimes these experiences were of literacy teaching by their own parents, sometimes by older siblings, and sometimes these experiences involved caring for siblings or teaching others. All but one of the parents reported these experiences, and confirmed that they were influential of

their current emergent literacy interactions with their own children in some way. This finding was unexpected. One influence that was expected was the fact that parents in this study that had higher levels of formal education, nine or more, were observed to engage in and reported engaging in a wider variety of language and literacy interactions with their children. Curenton and Justice (2008) indicated that the ideas towards literacy interactions held by the parents in their study who had attained a higher level of formal education had influenced their interactions with their children. It seems likely that the childhood educational experiences that some of the parents reported were also influential.

### **Summary**

Parents of Latino heritage with children diagnosed with speech or language difficulties engaged in emergent literacy interactions of various types and in various ways. They engaged in conversation that varied in the degree of decontextualization, length, and frequency, and sometimes language, but in a way that usually included many directives, and often occurred within their children's normal routine or during playtime. They invested time and energy into teaching their children language skills, tending to emphasize the names for objects. They engaged in print interactions that usually took place in the context of storybook sharing, and included naming and discussion of pictures and sometimes included discussions of events in the stories and reasons for them. The parents in this study who engaged in literacy teaching taught their children to identify letters, say and identify vowel sounds, and write letters and words. They did so in ways that sometimes involved elements of fun, and that were sometimes more serious.



These parents' emergent literacy interactions were influenced a great deal by their desire that their children have strong language and literacy skills. Their children's communication abilities and interests were influential. Parents' life circumstances had impact. Their current cultural resources, including their first language, and their childhood cultural experiences were also influential. In addition, parents' ideas about language and literacy development and teaching, as well as the level and type of formal and informal language and literacy experiences that they have had which may have formed those ideas were influential of their emergent literacy interactions with their children.

### **New or Noteworthy Results**

Some of the results explained above stand out as being new or noteworthy because of their potential impact on research and practice. Several of these results are listed below, followed by both general and specific recommendations for practice.

- As did one parent in this study, some parents from indigenous backgrounds engage in direct language and literacy teaching because their own parents engaged in these interactions with them when they were children.
- These parents of indigenous backgrounds may have Spanish as their second language, and be learning English as their third language.
- As did all parents in this study, some parents may demonstrate in the way they engage in language teaching interactions with their children, that they understand the importance of embedding this instruction in a child's normal routine.

- As did within two dyads in this study, non-verbal turn taking may still take place between parents and their children who are difficult to understand and who communicate most often at the one or two-word level.
- As evident in all dyads of this study, in spite of what might be assumed, parents of children with speech and language disabilities ask their children a substantial number of open-ended questions.
- While most parents tend to teach their children to label items during language teaching, some parents go beyond this practice and teach their children to use words to describe objects, introduce themselves, and make requests, as did one parent in this study.
- As did two children in this study, the children of some parents of Latino heritage that are bilingual may actually be acquiring Spanish as a second language, rather than English.
- As did the two in this study, bilingual parents and their children may speak in two different languages during the same conversation.
- As did two parents in this study, parents who share storybooks with their children may already be using print referencing.
- Just as one parent in this study, parents use sophisticated teaching techniques with their children such as verbal prompting, praise, wait time, and hand over hand assistance, depending on the observed needs of their children during these interactions.

- As did two parents in this study, some parents of children with more severe communication disabilities prioritize their children's oral language development over pre-literacy development.
- As did all parents in this study, many parents care about their children's language and literacy development, and each of them were engaged in some interaction to support the language and or literacy development of their children.

### **General Recommendations for Practice**

The results of this study provide insights into the emergent literacy interactions between the participating parents and their children, and the factors that may have influenced these interactions. The lessons learned about and from these dyads could help improve the practices and policies of those who serve other parents and their children within the Latino community. These implications relate to the way these parents are viewed, the way we gather information about the strengths and needs of parents and their children, and the services we provide for them. Many of these lessons could also be applicable to the improved service delivery for parents and their children beyond the Latino community.

### **The Lens**

One of the primary goals of this study was to find out how these parents were engaging in emergent literacy interactions with their children who had speech and language disabilities. Because of that goal, a decision was made to look for what was *there* rather than what was *missing*. In order to learn from these parents, it was essential

to abandon the deficit lens through which parents, especially those with low incomes from non-majority backgrounds, are often viewed. Positioned in the space where the characteristics of these interactions could be viewed and analyzed without negative bias, it was possible to see these characteristics and some of the factors influential of them with a greater level of clarity. Just as Luis Moll spoke of the *funds of knowledge* found in the homes of Latino parents in Moll et al. (1992) through participant observation in that study, from the interviews and observations completed in this study it was possible to form a picture of these parents' *emergent literacy funds of knowledge*.

Parents' strengths shone through. All of these parents cared about and supported their children's development. Regardless of the level of formal or informal education they had attained or the extent to which they had or had not benefitted from emergent literacy interactions with their parents as children, each engaged in some rich interactions with their children. No matter the severity of their children's speech or language disability, the parents worked to improve their children's speech and language skills in some way.

All individuals that are provided with the privilege of working with families of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds should adopt the strength-based lens. The adoption of this lens will enable the researcher, the educator, and the service provider to see not obstacles, but windows.

### **The Windows**

When it was explained to Beatrice that there is more that needs to be known and understood about the characteristics of the emergent literacy interactions that occur

between parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language impairments, what she said was instructive. “*La menos que uno venga y visita a la persona.*” [“One just needs to come and visit the person.”] (B-Interview Two) Just as visiting the parents who participated in this study yielded important information about their interactions with their children, so too could the practice of visiting and talking with other parents yield important information. Yet visiting is not enough; the questions we ask while looking through a strength-based lens are also important. Some important questions that should be kept in mind are: How do these parents already support their children’s language and pre-literacy development? What are the characteristics of these interactions? What are the best ways to support the rich interactions taking place? What are the interactions and strategies already in use by the parent that can be built upon to further support the language and pre-literacy skills of their children? What aspects of the parents’ culture and ideas should be incorporated and capitalized upon to best ensure any proposed interventions are culturally relevant and sustainable?

### **Specific Recommendations**

This study’s results had broad implications for practice such as adjusting the lens through which we view parents, utilizing observations and interviews in the home environment to learn about the interactions in which parents engage naturally with their children, and building interventions when needed that take parents’ *emergent literacy interactions funds of knowledge* into account. Specific recommendations for practices based on what was learned from the parents can also be made. These recommendations may be useful for speech therapists, classroom teachers, and research professionals.

### **Speech Therapists**

Some speech therapists might benefit from what was learned in the review of each child's speech therapy records, the DIAL-4 results, and what parents communicated about diagnosis and service delivery procedures. Three children were served by private speech therapists that were not employed by the local school system. One child was not being served by but was diagnosed by a therapist connected to a hospital. Two therapists were public school system employees. In spite of the differences in their employers, all but one therapist incorporated Spanish either into the assessments as the first language used, the only language used, or with the help of an interpreter. Regrettably, Diana, who spoke Spanish as her dominant language was assessed in English without the benefit of an interpreter. Important information was purportedly even gathered from Beatrice using questions only asked in English. Obviously, children should receive assessments using the language in which they are the strongest. Assessments given in a child's native language can alert therapists to the needs of each child (Department of Public Instruction: Exceptional Children Division, 2006). When assessments are given in a language the child does not speak fluently, treatment, while it may build the child's language skills in the second language, may completely overlook any needs the child may have in his or her native language. Aside from that fact, the state's school system discourages the practice of basing diagnosis solely on speech/language assessments in a language other than a child's native language (Department of Public Instruction: Exceptional Children Division, 2006). Results on the DIAL 4 screening administered in Spanish to Diana at the beginning of the second observation session indicated that she may have some

Spanish articulation difficulties that may warrant further assessment. Children should be assessed in their dominant language.

Another result of the study that might have application to speech therapy treatment was gathered from the parent questionnaires and the parent interviews. As mentioned earlier, parents noted that they wanted their children to have strong language development in both Spanish and English. It is important to recognize and reflect upon the fact that the language in which therapy was administered to children in the study seldom matched the parents' desire that their children would develop stronger language skills in both Spanish and English. It is beyond the scope of this study to debate the relative benefits of bilingualism versus monolingualism, and to explain the different kinds of bilingualism and their benefits. Guiberson et al. (2006) explain that when parents of children who are learning English at school continue using Spanish at home, this practice can better ensure optimal language development. Children who have a speech or language disability in their first language should receive therapy in that language, even if this necessitates the need for an interpreter.

In addition to diagnosing children using assessments in children's primary language and addressing their needs in both languages, some of the study's results may have implications for communication between speech therapists and parents. Recall the notes that Beatrice asked the primary researcher to interpret after the end of the first interview, and how Dona indicated that she still did not understand the particulars of Carolina's diagnosis. Parents should receive information in their dominant language, and that recommendations for practice at home be complete and usable.

In addition to parents' seeming need for better communication between themselves and their children's therapists, there seemed to be a need for better communication with parents about the diagnostic process and the diagnosis itself. Recall the confusion that Angela expressed about what the appointments scheduled for her daughter were for, or even where they were. Therapists should communicate more clearly, not only about their children's diagnosis, but also about the reasons for the appointment, and what will occur during the appointments. The diagnostic process and the diagnosis should be communicated to parents in their dominant language. Parents with transportation difficulties should be helped to get to the appointments, or evaluations should be provided in parents' homes.

In addition to the illuminating the need for better communication between therapists and parents and the language used for therapy and assessment, the results of this study have implications that are related to two other elements of service delivery. These include the advantages of therapy in the natural environment of the home, and the ways siblings can influence or be incorporated into therapy at home.

The only parent who indicated that a speech therapist had positively influenced the language and pre-literacy interactions she has currently with her child was Catarina, whose son had received speech therapy at home when he was a toddler. This result was evident in spite of the fact that four of the children in the other dyads were also receiving speech therapy. Catarina, in spite of the fact that this in-home therapy had ended in the spring before this study, was still using the strategies during the observation sessions that she had learned from the speech therapist. It was clear from the observation results that



Catarina understood that language teaching should be embedded in her son's play, media, and routine activities, using toys and other supplies that were already in the home. She was not observed using flash cards or any other special manipulatives during these interactions, and did not mention the need for these. It was unclear whether or not Catarina had just observed the therapist during sessions, or had the opportunity for guided practice of techniques during the sessions, but Catarina indicated that the therapist had discussed techniques with her and encouraged her to use them.

Another element of the home environment that the results of this study indicate may be important to consider is the presence, influence, and potential involvement of children's siblings or other relatives during therapy sessions in the home. Every child in this study had either a younger or an older sibling or relative present during most observed and reported emergent literacy interactions. Sometimes the other child interfered with the interactions, sometimes they were involved without interfering, and sometimes they were simply in the same room engaged in another activity. Because siblings or young relatives are likely to be present, incorporating them into therapeutic interactions could be beneficial. In this way, the siblings or young relatives may be able to provide opportunities to practice certain communication skills between therapy sessions. Because parents are likely to incorporate siblings or young relatives into their emergent literacy interactions with their children when therapy sessions are over, it would seem advantageous to demonstrate for parents and provide them practice opportunities that incorporate other children during therapy. In addition, therapists could demonstrate for parents, if needed, strategies to prevent the parents other children or

younger relatives from interfering with language teaching interactions. For example, a therapist could suggest that the siblings turn down the television.

Just as the results of this study relate to speech therapy practices, they also relate to the preparation of speech language pathologists. The recommendations made above about the lens that should be used to view parents, and the strategies and languages used during assessment and therapy should be included in the preparation of speech and language pathologists. Speech language pathologists in preparation should be encouraged to look for and reinforce parent strengths. They should be taught to observe and interview parents to identify these strengths. Speech language therapists in preparation should be taught how to deliver family centered therapy in parents' homes in a way that incorporates and build upon parent strengths as language teachers, uses materials already there, and incorporates siblings or young relatives into the communication interactions. They should also be taught to communicate regularly and effectively with parents, in a way that facilitates parents' efforts to support their children's speech and language skills.

### **Educators**

In addition to generating some recommendations for speech therapists and the preparation of those therapists, some of the study's results could be useful to classroom teachers and parent educators, and their preparation. As the practice of visiting parents' homes to observe and interview them helped the primary researcher understand their emergent literacy interactions with their children, classroom teachers and parent educators may also benefit from in home observations and interviews with parents. While

these observations may be helpful to teachers and parent educators, employing a strength-based lens would be imperative during these visits. It is important also to keep in mind that while not all parents engage in a large amount of storybook sharing, they are often engaging in other beneficial interactions with their children. These interactions may build children's language and literacy skills just as storybook sharing does, and should be supported. These interactions can also be built upon. Francisca's dancing to songs on a wedding video is just one of many of these rich interactions. Not only classroom teachers but parent educators could benefit from visiting parents' homes. The precious opportunity to see what the parents are doing and how they are supporting their children's development should not be lost. Again, the study's results demonstrate that even in homes where there seems to be a low level of interaction, there is usually a rich interaction that can be further fortified in ways that are culturally congruent, and fit what the parent is already doing. A parent educator might be tempted, for example, to see Angela's short conversational turns with Nina as evidence of weak support of Nina's language skills, yet Angela seemed to intuitively know that language teaching should be incorporated into her daughter's normal routines. Parent educators and teachers should make time to visit parents' homes, and should look for what each parent is already doing to support their children's development.

Just as the results of this study could be used to benefit parent and early childhood educators, they could also benefit those responsible for the professional preparation of these individuals. These practitioners should be encouraged to view parents through a strength-based rather than a deficit-based lens. They should be taught to observe and

interview parents in order to gather important information about their emergent literacy funds of knowledge. They should be taught to incorporate what they learn from these observations and interviews into effective service delivery, and should be encouraged to and instructed in effective ways to engage in home visits as a regular part of this service.

### **Researchers**

While the lessons learned from the participating parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech/language disabilities yielded important information that could improve and strengthen the practices of speech/language pathologists, early childhood professionals, and parent educators, there is still much left to be learned from these parents and others like them. There are unanswered questions that warrant further investigation. Some of these questions arose during the study, and others relate to questions that this study was not designed to address, but that still need answering. Still others are questions whose answers were anticipated to arise from the study, which did not do so. Answering these questions could benefit the field of early childhood education research.

It was anticipated that more would be learned about the decontextualized conversations in which these parents engaged with their children, especially those related to elaborative reminiscing. Instead, few decontextualized conversations were observed, and none of these related to past events that the parent and child had shared. Are these kind of conversations common between parents who are Latino and their children diagnosed with speech language impairment? Are conversations about shared or unshared events more common? Are conversations about children's past behavior more

common than discussions about shared and unshared events? What is the relationship between parents' level of formal and parent education, and the severity of their children's speech and language impairments to their decontextualized conversations and the characteristics of these conversations? Answering these questions may enable practitioners to better support these conversations and the benefits they can have for children's later reading development.

Another area of further research involves possible ways of extending this study to other populations and connecting it to the creation of assessment methods that could benefit parents and their children with speech language disabilities. Could the observation and interview techniques used in this study be used with other parents of Latino children who also have speech language disabilities? Would such a study yield helpful results, or do the observation and analysis techniques need to be further refined first? Would conducting fewer observations and one interview yield the same kind of rich data that this study did while using more observations? Could the observation and interview data, used in conjunction with this study's coding procedure, function as a way to gather information that would enable interventionists to tailor culturally responsive interventions to assist parents of Latino heritage and other non-majority groups in supporting their children's speech and language development? Answering these questions could enable parents to support their children's continued speech and language development.

### **Limitations**

While this study yielded meaningful results, including directions for further research that could benefit parents and their children with speech and language disabilities, there were limitations, as there are in all research. Some of these limitations are common to most qualitative research; other limitations were present in the chosen methods of data gathering and analysis, others arose from unexpected developments encountered collecting data, and others were reflective of the primary investigator.

First, this study was designed to get as accurate a picture as possible of the emergent literacy interactions between six parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language impairments. While the study achieved this goal, and much of what was learned could be helpful to professionals in the field, the results do not necessarily generalize to other parents of Latino heritage and their children with speech and language disabilities. This limitation is an unavoidable one inherent in any study with such a small sample size.

Second, any time observation is used in a context where the observed are aware they are being observed, it is likely to affect their behavior in some way. Occasionally during the observations, parents would glance at the iPad or mobile phone used to make digital video recordings of interactions. While the parents never interrupted or shortened the observed interactions after glancing at the iPad, there exists the possibility that the knowledge that the interaction was being recorded may have motivated the parent to continue with it. It is also unclear whether some parents refrained from engaging in some interactions with their children because they did not want to be observed doing them.

The interviews served as a way to guard against any incomplete picture of the interactions that relying solely on observational data would have created.

In addition to the effect that being observed may have had on the parents, the interactions and behavior of the children in the study may have been influenced by being observed. It usually took less than an hour for the children to seem comfortable enough with the presence of the primary investigator and to what she would be doing, to go on with what seemed like their normal activities, but most of the children became aware at some point that they were being videoed. Though they never stopped engaging in the interactions that were being recorded, they glanced at the iPad occasionally as their mothers had. Special care was taken to direct the attention of the children back to the interaction in which they were engaging, by the primary researcher's practice of using her eyes to show the children that she was paying attention to the parent, not the iPad. During two observation sessions in two different homes, siblings noticed that their brother's or sister's interactions with their mothers were being recorded, and they could be heard speaking a few words over the dialogue that was being recorded. In another home, it became difficult to use the iPad or mobile phone to record videos or take notes because an older sister kept grabbing and hitting the iPad. In the last two observation sessions in this home, a notepad was used to take the majority of the data, and a way to take a couple of quick videos with the mobile phone was found during the second observation.

Another limitation that is related to the observational data is the fact that observations were conducted solely at the parents' convenience. Due to this fact and the

fact that parents were asked to go about their normal routines, parents were observed during different times of day than that of other parents, engaging in their normal interactions with their own materials rather than at defined times using materials provided by the researcher. As a result, not every parent was observed engaging in a bedtime routine, and not every dyad was observed sharing a meal for example. This limitation was addressed by the practice of making sure each dyad was observed for six hours, adding several customized questions to each parent's second interview that addressed interactions that had not been observed, and by providing parents the opportunity to gather or photograph examples of interactions in which they commonly engage that may not have been observed. In addition, each interview included an open-ended question asking parents if there was anything else that they wanted to share that would help provide an accurate picture of their interactions. Parents were asked this question again during the member checking process, and each parent confirmed that the picture that was created of their emergent literacy interactions and the influence of these interactions was accurate.

In addition to the limitations mentioned above, two other limitations arose from the characteristics of the researcher herself. The primary researcher held a positive bias towards the parents. She went into each observation session looking for rich emergent literacy interactions, presuming that she would find them. She had to check her urge to cheer out-loud during some interactions she found especially rich, and had to keep from comparing the quality of interactions of one parent with that of another. Another limitation belonging to the primary researcher herself was her status as a second language



learner, a status she shared with most of the children and parents. Special care had to be taken to ensure that interview questions were read correctly when asked, that the parent understood them, and that the researcher's understanding of the answers was carefully checked by using reflective listening. In this process the parent's answer was summarized and the parent could indicate if what the primary researcher had understood was correct. To ensure accurate understanding especially of conversational interactions, audio and video recordings were made. In these instances the video and audio data became crucial, and the process of reviewing and transcribing this data enhanced the researcher's understanding of these interactions in a way that field notes would not have been able to do. While the dialogue transcribed from these recordings by the primary researcher were very helpful, her status as a second language learner does not guarantee that every transcribed word or phrase was written just as the parent said it. This reality made member checking essential and valuable to ensuring the study's validity. The process of member checking proved very helpful in confirming that the researcher was able to gain an accurate understanding of the data though most of the interactions and interviews took place using the researchers second language. Each parent expressed their impression that the picture of their language and literacy interactions with their children was accurate. The level of negotiated inter-rater agreement, as well as the process involved in reaching agreement, helped to further ensure the accuracy of the study's results.

In spite of the limitations of the study discussed above, it has yielded results that have added to the research literature information that could prove helpful to other researchers, speech therapists, and early childhood and parent educators. Extensive

efforts were made to reduce the impact of these limitations in such a way that the worth of the study was not diminished.

### **Conclusion**

The information gained from this study has added to the small body of research literature that relates to the characteristics of the emergent literacy interactions that take place between parents of Latino heritage and their preschool children with speech and language disabilities. Throughout this study, observational and interview data was collected that enabled the creation of a more complete picture of the interactions related to language and pre-literacy development within and between the participating dyads. Thanks to the parents' willingness to welcome this researcher into their homes, this study resulted in useful information that has the potential to benefit other parents and children, in spite of several study limitations. Perhaps future early childhood educators, speech therapists, parent educators, and researchers will be inspired by these parents' *emergent literacy funds of knowledge* to see and learn from other parents and their children the way this researcher has learned from the parents who participated in this study.

### **A Personal Note from the Researcher**

I began this study in chapter one with a personal statement on my own positionality. I indicated that I had benefited from the many ways I have been welcomed and included into the lives of people of color. I mentioned how my experiences at Bank Street College in New York had taught me much about the importance of working with the families of the children I would be teaching. I reflected on my own life where I have been privileged to be both parent and teacher to two gifted children, one of whom does

not share my skin color. I mentioned my interest in other cultures, including the diverse Latino culture, and in the Spanish language. I also mentioned my commitment to contributing in some small way to preventing poverty through supporting efforts of parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds to support their children's language and literacy skills in culturally congruent, strength-based ways.

Now, as this study closes, it takes its place among the richest multicultural experiences I have ever had. To say I was privileged to be welcomed into the homes of these six families does not fully encompass what actually occurred. I would never have found the parents without the help of community members, especially my cultural informants. Once these informants enabled me to connect with these parents, it felt to me that the parents and their children did not simply welcome me into their homes; they actively supported the research through their full cooperation during the entirety of it. I felt ours was a partnership. One parent mentioned the fact that her involvement in the study would be instrumental in my earning a Doctorate. She was right on many levels. The learning I did as a researcher in this study honed my skills and opened my eyes. It awed me. I learned so much from these parents, and from the entire experience. My Spanish even improved. I hope to use what I have learned to improve the outlook for families like the ones I have met. I look forward to continued research partnerships with and advocacy for parents from diverse backgrounds, as well as continuing friendship with the parents I met and the individuals that enabled these connections.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**PRELIMINARY MEETING PROTOCOL**

1. I will introduce myself, telling her that I am married and have two teen-age sons, that I am studying for my doctorate, and that I am very interested in early language and literacy development. I will thank her for allowing me to talk with her. I will explain that I am talking with her because I think that she can help me understand how families help their children learn the language and reading readiness skills they need for school.
2. I will explain that I have decided to choose parents that have certain characteristics, and that there is a questionnaire. I would need to fill out with them in order to see if she would be included in the study. I will then explain that I am required by UNC-G to explain and get consent using the consent form, before I can have them fill out the questionnaire.
3. I will explain the study, going over the consent form, and ask if she has any questions, then ask her to sign it if she is still interested in participating.
4. I will then guide the parent through the preliminary questionnaire.
5. As each parent answers the questions, I will add their first initial to the following grid until six parents are identified and all cells have an initial, and there are six parents:

<b>Low Income Level</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Child with SLI in Therapy and IEP</b>	<b>Spanish Dominant Dyad</b>	<b>Mother H.S. grad</b>	<b>Mother not H.S. Grad</b>	<b>Parent Education In Setting</b>	<b>No Parent Education In Setting</b>	<b>Girl</b>	<b>Boy</b>

6. Parents who meet the inclusion criteria represented in the demographic form and chart will be notified before the end of this meeting. A calendar will be given the parent, and the first interview and observation dates will be scheduled with the parent.
7. Parents who do not meet inclusion criteria will be notified and thanked.
8. All parents who attend the initial meeting will be given a picture book for their child.

## APPENDIX B

## PARENT ELIGIBILITY FORM

## PARENT ELIGIBILITY FORM

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Birthdate \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Gender: ☐ Boy ☐ Girl  
MM DD YY ( \_\_\_\_ total months)

Mother's/Guardian's name \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's birth date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Town, State, Country

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

What Language do you usually speak? \_\_\_\_\_ What language does your child usually speak? \_\_\_\_\_. What other languages, if any, are spoken in the home? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child attend school or child care? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Child's School \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child receive speech/language therapy?

Child's Speech Therapist \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have an active IFSP or IEP? ☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, what is the specific diagnosis?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mother's birth date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Town, State, Country

Mother's Highest Education Level: ☐ Primary (Grades 1-6) ☐ Secondary (Grades 7-12)  
☐ Some College ☐ College Degree

Number of adults in household: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of children in household  
(18 years and older) \_\_\_\_\_ (under 18 years old) \_\_\_\_\_

Annual family income levels:

☐ \$2,000-23,850 ☐ \$23,850-\$30,000 ☐ \$31,000-\$40,000 ☐ above \$40,000

## APPENDIX C

## PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE (BIO)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE (BIO\*)

Child's School \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Speech Therapist \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Middle Initial

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Birthdate \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Gender: ☐ Boy ☐ Girl  
MM DD YY

Mother's/Guardian's name \_\_\_\_\_

- How long have you lived in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_
- If lived anywhere else in the US, where was this? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_
- What helped you decide to come to the US.? \_\_\_\_\_
- Mother speaks: **Spanish?** ☐ None ☐ Some ☐ Pretty Well ☐ Fluently  
**English** ☐ None ☐ Some ☐ Pretty Well ☐ Fluently
- What language(s) does the mother usually speak at home with the child? \_\_\_\_\_
- Father's name** \_\_\_\_\_
- Highest grade completed by father \_\_\_\_\_ Father's birth date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Town State, Country
- Language father speaks at home: **Spanish** ☐ Never ☐ A little ☐ Average ☐ A lot ☐ Always  
**English** ☐ Never ☐ A little ☐ Average ☐ A lot ☐ Always
- Father speaks: **Spanish?** ☐ None ☐ Some ☐ Pretty Well ☐ Fluently  
**English?** ☐ None ☐ Some ☐ Pretty Well ☐ Fluently
- What language(s) does he usually speak at home with your child? \_\_\_\_\_
- If born outside of the U.S., how long in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_



12. If mother or father lived anywhere else in the US, where was this? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the questions below that will help understand your child's language environment and skills.

13. At home, in which language is usually used: (check all that apply)

	English	Spanish	Other (please specify) _____
Watch television	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use the computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read to your child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read newspapers & magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. What language does your child usually speak at home: (check all that apply)

	English	Spanish	Other (please specify) _____
With adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With brothers, sisters & friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Has your child received care outside your home prior to preschool? ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. If yes, please list the following information for each out-of-home child care experience:

Child Care Outside of Home	Type (relative, friend, center)	Child's Age When In Child Care	How Much Each Language Used by Caregiver?					
			Language	Never	A Little	About Average	A Lot	Always
#1			Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
			English	1	2	3	4	5
#2			Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
			English	1	2	3	4	5
#3			Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
			English	1	2	3	4	5

Circle the number that shows:

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
17. How important is it to you that your child speaks Spanish?	1	2	3	4	5
18. How important is it to you that your child speaks English?	1	2	3	4	5
19. How important is it to you that your child learns and speaks both Spanish and English?	1	2	3	4	5

***Think about what your child does now as a preschooler for the next questions....***

Mark the number that tells to what extent your child:

		1 Never	2 A Little	3 About Average	4 A Lot	5 Always
20. <u>Speaks in</u>	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. <u>Speaks sentences</u> of four to five words in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. <u>Says the names</u> of typical objects (for example, car, comb) when asked in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. 23. Uses words when talking with <u>brothers/sisters</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. 24. Uses words when talking with <u>other relatives</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. 25. <u>Answers questions</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. 26. <u>Points</u> to common objects (for example, car, comb) when asked in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. 27. Speaks using <u>"I", "you", "me"</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Follows directions in _____ (for example, you say "get the cup" and the child gets it)	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. 29. Uses words when talking with <u>other children</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. 30. Uses words when talking with <u>adults outside the home</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Can <u>tell you a story</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Speaks in _____ when <u>playing with other children</u> .	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Speaks in _____ when <u>talking with adults</u> .	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Speaks in _____ when <u>playing alone</u> .	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Speaks in <u>complete sentences</u> in	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Speaks in _____ during <u>routine activities</u> (for example bathing, combing hair, meal times)	Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

37. I can understand my child's speech in Spanish. ☐ Yes ☐ No

38. I can understand my child's speech in English. ☐ Yes ☐ No

39. Please describe any concerns you have about your child's language development in Spanish.

40. Please describe any concerns you have about your child's language development in English.

---

Signature of person completing form

---

Date

\*Much of this questionnaire has been reproduced directly or adapted from:  
Hardin, B., Scott-Little, C., & Mereoiu, M. (2013). *Family bilingual information & observation questionnaire*. UNC-Greensboro; Greensboro, NC., and piloted in  
Hardin, B. J., Scott-Little, C., & Mereoiu, M. (2013). Developing the BIO Questionnaire: A bilingual parent report tool for prekindergarten English learners Latino heritage. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 27, 485-509. doi:10.1080/02568543.2013.824940

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#### First Interview Protocol

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Rapport Building**

I will ask permission to record the interview, and let her know that I will stop recording or end the interview at any time if she requests I do so and that this will not bother me or have any negative consequences for her. I would explain the consent form and ask her to sign it.

#### **First Interview Questions**

- 1) How would you describe the characteristics of your child (personality, energy level, interests, attention span, abilities)?
  - A) What is his or her ability to have conversations with you? How would you describe his or her ability to understand what is said and communicate verbally with others?
- 2) What kind of experiences around storytelling, discussions, singing, memorable phrases (dichos), corridos, and or storybook sharing do you remember from your childhood?
  - A) Describe some of your experiences.
  - B) What do you remember about being sung to or singing with anyone at home? Can you describe that experience?

- C) Do you remember having discussions about different topics? What kind of topics?
  - D) What do you remember about being read to? Can you describe that experience?
  - E) What do you remember about your parents teaching you about letters, words, or letter sounds? Describe these experiences.
- 3) Describe how you think kids learn to talk? (*Ask the questions below, in order to get the answer to the question above.*)
- A) How do you think kids learn how to talk?
  - B) You have told me that children learn to talk by \_\_\_\_\_. How did you learn about that, or what experiences have you had that helped you develop these ideas?
- 4) What do you think parents can do to help their children with language skills?
- A) What kinds of things do you do that help your child develop his or her language skills?
  - B) How do you feel when you try to engage your child in a language-related activity like having a conversation, singing, or story telling? Why?
  - C) What kinds of topics do you sometimes talk about with your child? What was the last discussion you had?
- 5) What do you think about television and computers and children? How do you use them in your home?

- 6) What does your child already do with books, paper, and pencils? What do you think is going on when he or she does these things?
- 7) What do you think you already do that helps your child get ready to read?
  - A) What kinds of things do you do? (Games? Singing? Storybook sharing)  
*Do not list these )*
  - B) How do you feel when you try to engage your child in a reading-related activity? Why?
  - C) What do your child and you like to do that involves looking at printed words? (What was the last print-related activity you did together?)
- 8) What do you know about how kids learn to read? (*Ask the questions below, in order to get the answer to the question above.*)
  - A) What are some activities that involve printed items that you have done with your child.
  - B) How do you think kids learn how to read?
  - C) You have explained how you think children learn to read by \_\_\_\_\_.  
What experiences have you had that helped you develop those ideas?
  - D) What do you think is the best way to teach children to read?
  - E) When do you think this teaching should begin?
  - F) Who should teach children how to read?
  - G) Have your ideas about when and how changed over time? How and why do you think they have changed?

- H) How do you feel when you try to read to your child? (What was the last thing you and your child read?)
- 9) What else would you like to share with me that could help me understand how you help your child with his/her language or literacy development?

### **Second Interview Protocol**

#### **Preparation:**

Thank the parent for allowing another interview, and for the previous observations.

#### **Questions:**

- 1) What, if any, location/s in the community influence what you do in regards to language and reading?
- 2) (Ask questions that have been brought to light during the past interview and observations.)
- 3) Please show me and tell me about the items you have collected. Why did you select them?
- 4) Do you have any questions related to the study that you would like to ask me?
- 5) Is there anything more that I need to know in order to understand your family's language and literacy (what happens related to language and reading) in your family?



**APPENDIX E**

**OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (GRAND TOUR)**

Name	
Date	Time
Setting Description/Diagram	
Notes	

**APPENDIX F**

**STANDARD OBSERVATION FORM**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Activity	Time	Brief Description of Non-Interaction	Reactions/Comments
Interaction Type:		Detailed Interaction Notes	
Begin Time	End Time		

**APPENDIX G**  
**PARENT MEETING SCRIPT**

The following programs and individuals will be contacted in an effort to find two families:

- Sarah Austin Head Start program
- Imprints home visiting program
- Public schools with NC Pre-K classrooms
- Migrant Head Start programs
- Day care center with NC Pre-K program
- Speech Therapists
- El Buen Pastor family literacy program

A recruitment flyer will be distributed to program directors, and speech therapists, for distribution to parents via child backpacks. In addition, I will speak at parent meetings with the permission of the program directors.

During the presentation to the parents, the flyer and envelopes will be distributed and the PI will review it with the parents, saying the following in Spanish:

<<Hello, my name is Sheri Grace and I am a 4th year doctoral student at UNC-G. I am studying Early Childhood Special Education. I would like to learn about how parents that are from Spanish speaking countries engage in literacy activities with their three- four ½ year old children who are receiving speech therapy. If you were to agree to help me learn about those activities, I would meet with you to see if you are eligible, then

come to your home for observations and interviews. Let's look at the flyer and I will explain the study in more detail.

## APPENDIX H

### RECRUITMENT FLYER

## Would you like to participate in a research study?



**My name is Sheri Grace. I am a doctoral student in Early Childhood Special Education at UNC-G. I am conducting a study to learn more about how parents who are of Latino engage in language and pre-reading interactions with their children. I am looking for parents who are over 18 years old, are Latino, speak mostly Spanish, and who have a 3-5 year-old (Pre-K) child who has been receiving speech-language therapy.**

### Questions and Answers about the Study

**Q:** How long will it take?

**A :** Up to 13-16 hours spread out over five weeks

**Q:** What will happen?

**A:** - One introduction and eligibility visit (30 min.)

- One visit by Sheri to your child's speech therapist to see your child's speech records
- 3-5 observation visits of you and your child at home
- Two 90 min. interviews
- Parent-made collection of photos or videos
- Final visit (60 min.)

**Q:** Is there a thank you gift?

**A:** Yes. Parents who participate will receive **two \$75** store gift –cards (one at the end of week three and

one at the final visit during week five) or **one \$75** store gift –card, **one bag of educational toys**, and two educational sessions for you and your child. We cannot pay you for participation.

**ALL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.** Sheri Grace can be reached at: 336.705.1763 or [shgrace@uncg.edu](mailto:shgrace@uncg.edu). Please fill out the form below or call or email Sheri if you would like her to contact you about the study: (Send in the form below to your child's teacher, home visitor, or speech therapist. *Please use the sealed envelope for your privacy*)

I am interested in participating in the study. \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no It is Ok for Sheri Grace to contact me. \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please fill out the form below.

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Only six parents can participate in the study. Sheri Grace will contact you to schedule a meeting to sign a consent form and ask you some questions to see if you are eligible to participate. How should she contact you? \_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_ Phone

During what time of day would you like Sheri to contact you? \_\_\_\_ Morning \_\_\_\_ Afternoon \_\_\_\_ Evening

**APPENDIX I**

**ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION FORM**

Artifact	Description	Reason Chosen

Artifact	Description	Reason Chosen



## APPENDIX J

### CODE BOOK

Code	Definition
<b>Interaction Codes</b>	
<b>Conversation Contexts</b>	
! Int. Conv. CAT	Parent has verbal or non-verbal turn taking interaction involving two or more turns with their child.
! Int. Conv. Dramatic Play	Parent converses about the dramatic (Pretend) play as the child is engaging in this play
! Int. Conv. In Context of Normal Routine	Conversation between child and parent are embedded within a normally occurring routine, such as homework, meals, toileting, or chores
! Int. Conv. In Context of Special Ritual	Parent-Child conversation occur during special ritual such as decorating or preparation of a special meal
! Int. Conv. Media	Parent has a conversation with the child about a TV show or video, events or objects on a digital app, computer game or DVD
! Int. Conv. Play	Conversational (verbal or non-verbal turn taking) takes place during a play activity that is not dramatic play.
! Int. Conv. Storybook	Conversation between child and parent are embedded within storybook sharing
! Int. Conv. Storytelling	Conversational interaction of oral storytelling, monologue-not reminiscing
<b>Conversation Characteristics/Strategies</b>	
! Int. Conv. Behavior-Directives	Parent tells the child what to do during a conversational interaction.
! Int. Conv. Behavior-Directives (Monster)	Parent mentions monsters of some type in an effort to make the child engage in or stop a particular behavior.
! Int. Conv. Causal Explanation	Parent answers child's how or why question about or spontaneously explains a how or why relationship.
! Int. Conv. Clarify/Check	Parent checks to see if they understood what the child said by repeating what the

Code	Definition
<b>Interaction Codes</b>	
	child said with a questioning tone, or asking the child if that is what he or she said.
! Int. Conv. Closed Quest. Yes/No	Parent asks a child a question that can only be answered with a yes or no
! Int. Conv. Decontextualized	Parent engages with the child in a conversation about past or future events, or events that are occurring presently but are not visible or audible in the current space.
! Int. Conv. Expand	Parent repeats what the child has just said, but adds words or a phrase.
! Int. Conv. Here Now	Parent engages the child in conversations re: events and objects present in the here and now
! Int. Conv. Language Choice/Code Switching	Parent uses a English versus Spanish or switches between the two during a conversational interaction
! Int. Conv. Name or Describe	Parent names or describes objects or actions during a conversation/verbal interaction
! Int. Conv. Nonverbal Turn-taking	Parent engages in turn taking behavior using gestures, facial expressions, and vocalizations that are not words.
! Int. Conv. Open End. Ques. Wh	Parent asks open questions that cannot be answered with yes or no-Who what when where how why
! Int. Conv. Other Verbal Interaction-song	Parent sings or recites rhymes for or with child
! Int. Conv. Parent Repeats	Parent repeats exactly what the child says, and does not do this to clarify what the child has just said.
! Int. Conv. Rephrase/Recast	Parent corrects child's incorrectly pronounced word or grammatically incorrect phrase or sentence, by restating the word, phrase, or sentence correctly, using a questioning tone, or a normal tone.
Level of Conversation Contextualization	
Other Conversational Interactions/Characteristics	

Code	Definition
<b>Interaction Codes</b>	
<b>Language Teaching Contexts</b>	
! Int. Lang. Teach- "Helping" with chores	During parent chore time parent gives children directions or asks questions that can build expressive or receptive language skills (laundry, dishes, cooking family meal)
! Int. Lang. Teach- Child Routines	Parent interacts during routine time in such a way that does or has the potential to build child vocabulary or communication skills in the area of receptive or expressive language (toileting, hand washing, mealtime, dressing)
! Int. Lang. Teach -Other Book	Coloring book or other book was used
! Int. Lang. Teach- Play	Parent comments on, participates in or initiates play outside of routines in ways that can build receptive or expressive language skills (art, toy, electronic media)
! Int. Lang. Teach- Storybook Sharing	Parent teaches vocabulary, works on pronunciation, or other communication skill while sharing a book with their child.
! Int. Lang. Teach-Media	Parent interacts during computer, TV, digital ap, CD, radio, or video time in ways that can teach child vocabulary, pronunciation, or comprehension
<b>Language Teaching Technique/Strategies</b>	
! Int. Lang. Teach- Define/Describe	Parent defines or describes objects or actions, or teaches the child to do so
! Int. Lang. Teach- Expansion	Parent expands upon a child's comment during language teaching by adding more detail or richer vocabulary to that comment.
! Int. Lang. Teach- Naming/Labeling	Parent gives label or name for objects or teaches the child to do so.
! Int. Lang. Teach- Pronunciation-Repetition	Parent teaches child to pronounce a word by telling the child to repeat the whole word or parts of it.

Code	Definition
<b>Interaction Codes</b>	
! Int. Lang. Teach- Rephrase/Recast	The parent corrects a child's language error by correctly stating what the child was trying to say. The parent may do this while using a questioning tone.
! Lang. Teach- Spanish/English	Parent teaches vocabulary by associating Spanish with English words and vice versa
<b>Print Contexts</b>	
! Int. Print. Packaging	Parent and child look at labels, pictures, or other words on boxes, cans, or other packaging
! Int. Print. Shares Other Books	Parent is present or participating as the child draws, colors, or writes letters in coloring books or workbooks
! Int. Print. Storybook Sharing	Parent child storybook sharing
<b>Print Interaction Characteristics</b>	
! Int. -Using Print referencing	Parent points to print while saying word or sentences, and/or asks or guides child to do so
! Int. Book. C "Reads"/M Listens	Child seems to pretend to read the story aloud to parent
! Int. Print. Asks Questions -Pictures	Parent asks and answers questions about actions in the storybook/package
! Int. Print. Decontextualized Storybook. Interaction	Parent and child talk about something not in the book
! Int. Print. Describes pictures	Parent describes objects and/or actions in the story or other printed material
! Int. Print. Give labels for pictures	Parent labels or asks C to label objects in the book spontaneously, or when C requests this.
! Int. Print. Reads the Storybook word for word	For most of the story, parent reads the text word for word without many pauses to ask or answer questions, or describe actions or objects.
<b>Literacy Teaching Contexts</b>	
! Int. Lit. Teach. Using Routines	Parent teaches literacy skills directly or indirectly within child's routine activities outside of play

Code	Definition
<b>Interaction Codes</b>	
! Int. Lit. Teach. Using Special Session	Parent sets aside or uses play or non-routine time longer than 5 minutes, (including school homework time, during which she teaches sounds, writing, letters, rhyming, etc. using toys, video, art, games, or electronic media, or book handling directly or through modeling
! Int. Lit. Teach-Using Child-Chosen Play	Parent uses child-chosen play or play-like activities to build the child's literacy skills.
! Int. Lit. Teach-Using story sharing	Parent points out print letters, sounds or words, or instructs child in book handling during storybook sharing
<b>Literacy Teaching Utterances/Strategies</b>	
! Int. Lit. Teach-Call-Response word repetition	Parent reads a word or words, or letters while showing it to the child, and has the child repeat it
! Int. Lit. Teach. Focusing on letter sounds	Parent focuses on letter sounds during literacy teaching interaction
! Int. Lit. Teach. Writing	Parent teaches or encourages writing of words, letters, or shapes. Coloring in lines is not making a particular shape, so does not count as teaching of writing.
! Int. Lit. Teach-Focusing on letter names	Parent emphasizes letter names during literacy teaching

Code	Definition
<b>Influences Codes</b>	
<b>Parent Factors</b>	
<b>Parent Realities</b>	
* Infl. Parent. Reality (Bilingualism Level)	Parent's level of proficiency in Spanish versus English influences the interaction, or is mentioned as an influence
* Infl. Parent. Reality (Father's Schedule)	The fathers work schedule influences the language and literacy interactions
* Infl. Parent. Reality (Frustration/Stress)	Parent's negative attitude toward, or stress influences interaction, or parent mentions these factors
* Infl. Parent. Reality (Low Literacy Level)	A parent's low literacy level due to educational opportunities influences interactions, or is mentioned as an influence
* Infl. Parent. Reality (Mom. Work/Chore Schedule)	The parent's own work/housework schedule influences the language and literacy interactions
* Infl. Parent. Reality (Relaxed/Happy)	Parent looks as if or indicates that she is relaxed or happy during an interaction, or explains happiness and calmness during interactions
<b>Parent Ideas</b>	
* Infl. Parent .Ideas (Lang. Theory)	Parent's theory of how to teach language-What parent thinks parents should do; A parents theory of language development influences interactions/parent describes theory
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (C has Lang. Problem)	Parent says that they think their child has a problem communicating
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (C has NO Lang. Problem)	Parent does not think her child has a language problem
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (C's Span. and Eng. Important)	Parent says that think Spanish and English are important for their children to learn.
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (Cultural Practices- Lit/Lang)	Parent notes Latino cultural beliefs or attitudes about reading; Parent says Latino parents are not accustomed to talking much to their children
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (Kids Learn from TV/Tech.)	Parent says that think that children can learn from Television/technology

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (Teach=Love)	The parent indicates that teaching children is a sign of love, or a way to love them
* Infl. Parent. Ideas (TV Negative Effects)	Parent thinks TV has, or may have a negative impact.
* Infl. Parent. Ideas. (Reading Theory)	Parent's ideas about how children learn to read, Parent thinks children learn to read by memorizing familiar stories; The parent's theory of the best way to teach reading influences the interaction, or is mentioned as one. Parent feels whole family should teach children to read; Parents feel reading to children should begin when they are babies.
* Infl. Parent-Ideas (Sees self as educator)	Parent says she views self as a teacher, or that she teaches
<b>Child Factors</b>	
* Infl. Child Difficulties (Letter/Sound Corr. Lag?)	The child seems to be missing or lagging in letter or sound correspondence knowledge according to age
* Infl. Child Difficulties (Behavior)	The difficult behavior influences the interaction, or is mentioned as an influence
* Infl. Child Interests	The child's interests are mentioned as an influential factor of an interaction, or these are evident in the conversation, language teaching, or print interaction topic
* Infl. Child. Ability (Attention)	The child's strong ability to pay attention for long periods of time influences the interaction, or is mentioned as a positive influence
* Infl. Child. Difficulties (Attention)	The child's attention span difficulties influence an interaction, or are mentioned as an influence.
* Infl. Child. Disability (Lang)	The child's difficulty talking influences the interaction, or is mentioned as an influence; The child's difficulty understanding language influences the interaction, or is mentioned by the parent as an influence of interactions.
* Infl. Child. Strength (Lang)	The child's strong language skills are mentioned as a positive influence or is evident as one on an interaction

Code	Definition
<b>Socio-Cultural and Language Socialization Factors</b>	
<b>Related to Adulthood Experiences</b>	
* Infl. Cultural (Faith)	A parent's religious faith influences the interactions the parents have with the focus child, or is mentioned doing so. Ex. Reading Bible, singing Church songs etc.
* Infl. Cultural Adulthood (C's School)	The expectations of the school for certain kinds of emergent literacy interactions influence the kinds of or characteristics of these interactions between the parent and the focus child at home; or they are mentioned as influential.
* Infl. Cultural Adulthood (Respeto/Bien Educado)	A parent's desire to raise children that have manners, show respect, and value family influences their interactions with their children, or is mentioned as a strong influence
* Infl. Cultural-(Other Community Visits)	Parent mentions that community resources such as stores or churches have been influential of interactions
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood ( Lang. Preference/Pressure)	A parent uses a particular language due to her preference for it, or because she feels it is important for the child to know it, and this influences the interactions or is mentioned as doing so.
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (Book Lang Mismatch)	The language of the storybook does not match the one which the parent speaks, or the parent explains this is the case.
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (Books accessible)	Books are accessible in the home.
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (Extended Family)	Extended family mentioned as influential of emergent literacy interactions
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (P. Taught)	Parent is influenced by their previous experiences teaching language or reading.
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (Parent Education)	Parent's participation in current or past parent education influences the current interaction, or is mentioned as an influence of interactions.



Code	Definition
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (P's Older Children)	A parent's older children influence the interactions of the parent's with the focus child, or are mentioned as influential
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (P's Younger Children)	A parent's younger children influence the interactions of the parent with the focus child, or are mentioned as influential
* Infl. Cultural. Adulthood (SES-Resources)	The parent and child have access to the internet. A parent's possession or lack of material resources influences interactions, or is mentioned as an influence
*Infl. Cultural- (Library/Bookstore Visits)	Parents visit bookstores or libraries
<b>Related to Childhood Experiences</b>	
* Infl. Cultural (Childhood Folklore)	Interaction is influenced by currently by the folklore of their childhood.
* Infl. Cultural .Childhood.(P's Parent Not Literate)	Parent's parent/s did not know how to read or write
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (Family Poverty)	The parent's experiences of childhood poverty influence their interactions (conversations)
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (Few P-C Lang./Lit. Experiences)	The language and/or literacy interactions that the parent's parents had with them when they were children influence the parent's current interactions with their children now, or are mentioned as an influence. Parent says they had few conversational interactions with their parents.
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (Had P-C Lang/Lit. Exp.)	Parent had many childhood language experiences with her parent/parents. Parents say that their parents taught them literacy lessons. Parent's mom or dad told stories, read them books, etc.
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (P-C Directives-Ordenes)	Parent explains that their parents often told them what to do.
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (P's Parents Lacked Time)	Parents say their parents had little time to read or talk to them.
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (Ps' Primaria)	A parent's previous school literacy learning experiences influence current interactions, or are mentioned as influential

Code	Definition
* Infl. Cultural. Childhood (P's younger siblings/relatives)	Parent's role in caring for younger siblings as a child influences current interactions
*Infl. Cultural-Childhood (Other Lang. Experiences)	Parent had language experiences outside of school and family that were influential